

# SOUTHERLY



NUMBER THREE  
1951

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by Ken Levis

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ENGLISH,  
by G. A. Wilkes

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PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

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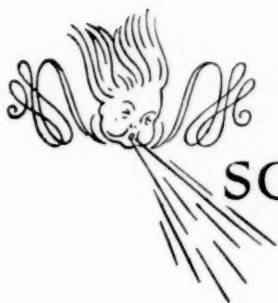
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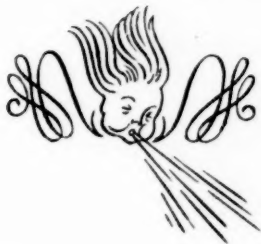


SOUTHERLY



FRANK WILMOT

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## Frank Wilmot as "Furnley Maurice"

BY T. INGLIS MOORE

It is a curious fact that when Frank Wilmot died in February 1942, at the age of sixty, the Melbourne press showed virtually no critical appreciation of his literary achievement. For Wilmot was Melbourne born and bred. He had spent his whole life in the city writing, selling, printing, and publishing books. He had become a force in our literary criticism, whilst in his later years his wide knowledge and his critical taste had made him a valuable member of the Advisory Board of the Commonwealth Literary Fund. He had produced a considerable literary output in a number of fields—pure lyric, satire, reflective lyric, descriptive verse, children's songs, and social poetry. He had also written a volume of critical essays and assisted in compiling anthologies of Australian essays and verse. Above all, as the poet "Furnley Maurice", he had put Melbourne permanently on our literary map by his re-creation of the city in his *Melbourne Odes*.

The strange neglect by Melbourne of her poetic creator was remedied later when a Memorial Committee published Vance Palmer's booklet *Frank Wilmot*. I never knew Wilmot personally, but here Vance Palmer brings out clearly, in a fine piece of sympathetic writing, the qualities of Wilmot the man—his integrity and seriousness as a poet and patriot; his sturdy independence and commonsense, with hatred for all forms of humbug; his sensitiveness and modesty; and his combination of shyness with a keen sense of humour expressed in illuminating witticisms. Furthermore, Vance Palmer puts "Furnley Maurice" in his social and literary setting, showing the influences that led to his development as a poet fired by a social conscience and a national faith. We see Wilmot responding to such influences as his Socialist father and the radical Bernard O'Dowd, the exuberant nationalism of the nineties and the first decade of this century when Australia was still Australia Felix and potential "Delos of a coming Sun-God's race", then the first World War with its disillusionments and the spiritual malaise that followed it, to be deepened by the depression years.

The Palmer sketch also helped, I found, to throw further light upon certain traits in Wilmot's work. Arising out of his character, I feel,

*Note:* This article is condensed from a larger study to be published as part of a volume *Nine Australian Poets*.

was a conflict in his verse between the romantic idealist and the cynical satirist which resulted in the romantic irony of the *Melbourne Odes*. The conflict seems threefold in cause: personal, philosophical, and social. On the personal side, Wilmot rarely lets himself go competely for long in his emotions, for just when his poetry begins to get into its stride and gallop freely he reins it in, and, indeed, sometimes pulls it up on its haunches abruptly. Hence we find a trend to incongruity, anticlimax, and an irritating unevenness in poetic quality. Oscar Wilde once defined cynicism as "the sentimentalist's Bank Holiday", and Wilmot's irony seems to spring partly from a natural diffidence of temperament and partly from the disappointment of the idealist. When Wilmot spins the coin of his thought, sometimes it falls heads for romance, sometimes tails for satire; but it is always the same coin, minted in the metal of his idealism.

Philosophically, too, the conflict between heart and head extends to a dichotomy, not always resolved, between Wilmot's idealism, warm with emotion, and the intellectual cynicism expressed in his satirical work. If he held, especially in his earlier years, high aspirations for his country and humanity, he also possessed a bitter sense of the tragedy and frustration forming an inherent part of life itself—a sense voiced in personal terms in the poem entitled "To Furnley Maurice When He Talks Big".

Wilmot's internal struggle between the romantic and realist in him was probably also social in origin as well, since Vance Palmer suggests that he was inhibited by the ultra-respectable, philistine Melbourne of his day. Furthermore, as H. M. Green points out acutely in his *Fourteen Minutes*, Wilmot was "in the difficult position of standing upon the borderline between two ages; the enthusiastic, romantic nationalistic age that ended with the first World War, and the comparatively disillusioned, sophisticated, cosmopolitan age in which we live at present". One may go further to regard the inward conflict in Wilmot's character and poetry as a personal expression of the outward conflict between two Australias, between the Utopian values held by many of our writers from the 1890s to about 1914 and the post-war confusion in national thought, with its loss of the earlier vision of a self-sufficient people forging a new and resplendent democracy. It shows the depth of Wilmot's faith, however, that he was able to reach a final unity of realism and romanticism in the *Melbourne Odes*, preserving his ideals without losing grip of actualities. Despite the note of irony running throughout his work, the total impression is one of affirmation.

Another notable feature of Wilmot's work as a whole is its variety. From 1903 to 1936 he published altogether no less than thirteen volumes or slim booklets of verse, containing almost four hundred poems. In these he appeared as the lover and the nature-lover, the patriot with earnest aspirations for Australia, the prophet fervent in condemnation of war, the social poet concerned with the problems and the injustices of his society, the humanitarian with sympathy for the sufferings of the common people, the democrat with faith in them, the satirist of war and economics, the descriptive poet painting his Melbourne, the philosopher seeking out the significance in ordinary daily experience, and the thinker handling ideas of life and the universe. These aspects are all represented in the discerning selection made by Percival Serle after Wilmot's death and published in 1944 simply as *Poems* by Furnley Maurice. Indeed, his work was so uneven as well as varied that he profited especially from such a selection, which shows him only at his best.

As a poet Wilmot developed slowly. His first volumes—*Some Verses*, *Some More Verses*, and *Unconditioned Songs*—were undistinguished, although *The Bay and Padie Book: Kiddie Songs* has become a classic. Then in 1917 came a tremendous development with the single long poem *To God: from the Weary Nations* (later retitled *To God: from the Warring Nations*). This lacks construction and economy, the thought often revolving and coming back repetitively, whilst it also suffers from rhetoric, from its public type of exhortation, and its conventional device of personification. As a poem of the first World War it now seems dated. Yet it remains an eloquent attack on war and a passionate humanitarian plea. Often single passages are exalted by the intensity of Wilmot's feeling, lifted up into such fine poetry as

... God, let us forget  
That we have accused of barbarous intent  
The foe that lies in death magnificent.  
How can we hate forever, having proved  
All men are bright and brave and somewhere loved?

... the dreamers wait  
Remembering the precept and the plan, -  
The changeless laws that angry men forget,  
The just and splendid destiny of man  
We quarrelling children must acknowledge yet.

We thought to snatch the sacred flame from Thee—  
 Look at our soul's scorched breast, our withered wings,  
 And pity, Lord, our poor humanity!

Savage indignation at war's cruelty and destruction is expressed again, stridently yet powerfully, in the small but provocative volume, *Eyes of Vigilance*, published in 1920 with the somewhat daunting sub-head: "Divine and Moral Songs." Here, too, he attacks Australia's pre-occupation with oversea troubles, its rejection of its own vision for imported controversies. He is characteristically Australian in his genuine sympathy with the underdog, in his radical protest at social injustice, in his feeling that the excesses of poverty and misery, long accepted in the slums of the older worlds overseas, must be condemned as indefensible in our own new, broad land. Such poems as "Echoes" and the two sonnets, "1914" and "The Wells Unfailing" are strongly felt, and move musically in memorable phrasing.

In *Arrows of Longing* (1921) Wilmot drops the prophetic mantle to become the lyric singer again, but the mood is a minor one. With the exception of the piece called "Lovelight", the verses contain fancy rather than imagination, as Coleridge would put it, though some have a fresh and individual charm. So, too, *The Gully and Other Verses* (1929) contains many lyrics which flash out in striking lines, beautiful cadences, and fine images. There is an original imagination at work in such poems as "The Ghost", "To a Telegraph Pole", and "Plunder".

*The Gully* also marks an advance in style, with rhetoric discarded for a simpler, suppler speech closer to life. Yet it does not contain those "fresh ways, fresh words, fresh music" which Wilmot asserted were required to sing Australia fitly and fully. Only in a few stray passages, again, does the poet give us concrete pictures of nature or even essay to catch those revealing glimpses which Dorothy Wordsworth caught so superbly in her landscape or Norma Davis painted so vividly in Tasmania. Wilmot is concerned rather with expressing his own feeling for the bush than the bush itself. Thus the most interesting feature of *The Gully* is its reflection of that sacerdotal feeling with which our poets so often approach our country. In older countries, such as England, the landscape has long been humanized; here our nature poets go to the unpeopled, untamed bush in that ancient religious mood with which the Druids made their sacrifices to the trees. Thus *The Gully* is devotional or ritual in character—a form of worship. From contact

with the "spirit bound Within this holy ground" Wilmot returns to the city exalted in faith, "chastened and cleansed".

At last, in the *Melbourne Odes*, Wilmot found himself as an individual poet. No other Australian poet could have presented Melbourne in such an original amalgum of brute fact, satiric humour, and interwoven imagination. Like so much of Wilmot's work, the *Odes* suffer from incongruities, gaucheries of style, and the never completely resolved conflict in him between the traditionalist and the modernist in form and between the romantic and the satirist in approach to the subject. Yet the concept is realized in a way that Wilmot had never realized his concepts before. In his essay "Romance" he had pointed out that Romance lives, not in earth, but in the imagination. "All events," he declared, "are significant." And so he wrote on such unpromising topics as old boots in a pawnbroker's window, telegraph poles, an old horse, the agricultural show at Flemington, and the Victoria Markets of Melbourne. His aim, he proclaimed, was "to draw imaginative significance from everyday objects" and to replace the "worn-out patterns" of verse with modern, colloquial diction. Both aims were achieved with success.

Take, for instance, his evocation of the unseen country indicated by its exhibits at the agricultural show and its effect on the city dwellers as they go home:

We all turn homeward dusty and overcast  
By a sense of cattle-hills without a name;  
Carrying bags of samples of the vast  
Uncomprehended regions whence they came.  
Drenched with the colour of unexperienced days  
We go on our different ways;  
Stallions loose on the plains; apples of Hesperides;  
Quiet lakes and milking sheds; 'Fares please, fares please.'

The poems on the Victoria Markets are first-rate, carrying us along with a rollicking élan, painting vivid pictures of the markets where

The old horse with the pointed hip  
And disillusioned under-lip  
Stands in a drift of cabbage leaves  
And grieves.

Here Wilmot attains a vitality and pungency of writing that is a long cry from his earlier moralizing and sentiment. Here we have urban life in modernist terms, with that "apotheosis of the insignificant"

that G. K. Chesterton once defined as "the characteristic of the modern movements *par excellence*".

Having surveyed his development briefly, where, then, do we place Wilmot amongst Australian poets? Some estimates have been high. Thus Walter Murdoch said of *To God: from the Weary Nations* when it appeared that "It is Furnley Maurice's high-water mark. . . . It is more than a fine poem—it was a great action. I wish to record my unshaken belief that Australian poetry has nowhere else risen to such prophetic heights of inspiration". Bernard O'Dowd, in his preface to *Arrows of Longing*, praised Wilmot as "one of the few who are building the foundations of the real Australasia that, when her soul comes, is to be . . . . He has humour, and a fine fancy, and can respond to the rollicking chords in our national life, but also has the high seriousness, fervid indignation and poignant sympathy of the prophet poet". An outside assessment came from C. Hartley Grattan, American critic, who paid homage to O'Dowd and Furnley Maurice in an article in the *Australian Quarterly*, June 1938, saying: "These two men have insisted upon the necessity of producing a poetry that deals with the central issues of life, and Maurice has been especially active in the advocacy of the use of new forms, as well as the continued assimilation of the Australian environment (including the urban environment) to poetry." After naming Brennan, Baylebridge, and Shaw Neilson, he asserts that in the work of these five men "we have the poetry worthy of really close inspection". He adds that "It is certainly to the credit of Australia that it has produced five, possibly six poets, in about thirty years, who have something to say and can say it effectively." In his later Foreword to my *Six Australian Poets* he again stated: "Personally I think Furnley Maurice should be added to the company, and I am not too sure that McCrae should be included in it."

Well, poetic evaluations must always differ according to individual taste, and personally I place McCrae above Wilmot. It is significant that the eulogies already quoted all tend to stress Wilmot's content rather than his form, his message rather than his poetry as such. He himself claimed in one of his essays: "It is not perfection that makes permanency. We are not looking for perfect work. We admire work that does what one thinks necessary at the time, that keeps on going somewhere, that pulls its weight." In art, which includes poetry, "Form is Life", as Blake put it, "Lack of Form is Death". Much of Wilmot's work will die because it is an incomplete form, unrealized partly on account of a natural weakness in creative power, partly on account of his pre-

occupation with his social message. His sense of style was always imperfect, and there are few complete poems which are artistically satisfying. Again and again, just when I am exalted by some fine lines of poetry in Wilmot, I find myself dashed to the ground by some crudity of form, some touch of prosaic flatness or bathos, some faltering of the creative impulse.

It may be claimed that Wilmot must be judged as one of O'Dowd's "Poets Militant", whose social message suffices. Here we must make a clear distinction between two functions of poetry, its social one and its artistic one. The social function is, I feel, important and valid, even if temporary in character, and Wilmot—like Mary Gilmore and his mentor O'Dowd—gave social service to Australia by writing useful "tracts for the times". On the other hand, there are inherent artistic weaknesses in what Keats called "poetry that has a palpable design upon us". If a poet chooses to write messages for his time, he may serve valuable non-artistic purposes, but he may—and often does—forego the immortality created by enduring form and a universal content of thought and feeling. The ultimate judgment of poetry must be poetic, that is, artistic, and a social message will only survive if it is expressed in a creative form achieving true art.

Despite these qualifications, Wilmot remains a true poet, if a poet of snatches, a creator—except in the *Melbourne Odes* and a few pieces such as "Lovelight", "Echoes", and the sonnet called "1914"—of lines and passages rather than of whole poems. His feeling was sincere, and it reached intensity in such emotions as pity and indignation. He had a gift of phrasing which was not sustained but which flashes out in memorable lines such as those quoted from the *Melbourne Odes* and:

We must be blinder, lad, when apples glow,  
Eyes are only to weep with now.

How can we hate forever, having proved  
All men are bright and brave and somewhere loved?

The slow-falling shuffle of the sea.

Tall ghostly gums in glacial silence dressed  
Towered in eternal rest;  
A mass of silver fog, a floating shroud,  
Rolled slowly up the hillside to the crest  
Like silence going home into its cloud.  
A woodman humped his pack and sauntered west,

Uphill, into the sky,  
Where all things go that die  
Like flame and sound, and mist and minstrelsy.

When the clouds melt back to their milky origins,  
. . . When chains flow back to their ore.

or, in the satiric strain:

*When Batman first at Heaven's command  
Said, 'This is the place for a peanut-stand,'  
It must have been grand.*

He had, moreover, the poet's gift of imagination, which was displayed not only in striking images on occasion, but also in his imaginative treatment of such themes as an old lady knitting at a concert or the Victoria Market butcher "selling chops to a doubting dame". Although the intellectual quality of his work is slight, he had both a social and a philosophic outlook on life which gave breadth to his poetry. Indeed, it was his humanism as much as his observation that infused vitality into his portrait of Melbourne life.

Finally, apart from the intrinsic value of his poetry, Wilmot is to be honoured for the contribution he made to our poetic development by pioneering the way for the use of contemporary speech in dealing with contemporary life. He has also a place in our poetic history by his widening of poetic techniques through the use of free verse as well as of colloquial diction, so that the poet indifferent to formal perfection will be remembered partly for his services as an importer and distributor of modernist forms. It is a caustic indictment of our literary backwardness that Wilmot, as late as 1934, should have found it necessary to defend his iconoclastic rejection of romantic "poetic diction" for colloquial language in his vigorous Preface to the *Melbourne Odes*. Decades had passed since poets had used "modernist" forms in England and America, but Wilmot still had to explain to Australia why he wrote of her in Australian. Today the lesson has been learned, and poets write naturally, using contemporary speech and adapting "modernist" techniques to their purposes. It is fitting, however, to pay tribute to Frank Wilmot as "Furnley Maurice" for his pioneering, to remember him as a poetic emancipator as well as poet. His irony and disillusionment, his radical spirit and social outlook, all made him respond to modernist methods, and he was better equipped than any other Australian poet of his time to act as a forerunner of that modern realism

which later found a more fully developed and more skilful expression in the poetry of Kenneth Slessor. By taking our poetry from the bush to Melbourne, too, he also broadened the scope of the national poetry as well as its methods. He did this so well, creating his Melbourne so vigorously, that he might justly join with O'Shaughnessy's "Music-Makers", who claim

With wonderful deathless ditties  
We build up the world's great cities.

As poetic architect he built a living Melbourne of the mind.

---

## Girl and Death

Out of the forest of winter  
the young girl is crying:  
—The love is not yet born  
that must make ready for dying.  
The world is not yet mine  
I must prepare to lose  
and the door scarcely opened  
that now must close.

Up the long stair  
I climbed from my tyrant Death  
to find him waiting here;  
and all the jewel day is darkened  
with his breath.

My darling, that you should die so,  
and I not near you!  
Only trespass and hate  
bent down to hear you.  
And over the dark fields  
hatred like winter blows  
to freeze the bud in the root  
and kill the climbing rose.

Cold is the stair  
my heart and I descend  
towards a death that nothing now  
will mend.

JUDITH WRIGHT

# A Travel Journal\*

BY J. R. ROWLAND

---

## QUEENSLAND COAST

The unwrinkled sea  
Beneath us crawls; or rather  
Swarms with the dense and even grain of leather,  
A lizard-skin of light.  
Suddenly an island: watch the lucid membrane  
Stretch on its slopes and glitter in its bay.

Now to fall  
Through a league of air; to land  
With ballooning overcoat near the concave sand  
And, water in one's shoes,  
To enter, and finding no one, take possession  
Of that red cottage, tiny as a crystal:  
With stick and beard  
Like Crusoe, and the boat  
Which sits beside its shadow, lightly to float  
Away from time, in perfect  
Boredom, joining the predatory order  
Of the fish, the sly anemone and the bird:

Day upon day  
With blander mind to live  
In the folding sound of the reef; and watch above  
The steady flyingboats  
Passing like intermittent memoranda  
Of the weekdays lost in that perpetual Sunday. . .

Still, at the outset  
Of such a day and journey,  
Leading from the known to an unvisited country,  
These dreams of abdication are perhaps  
Surprising: for destination and future,  
With all their claims and promises, must be met.

## FLYING OVER ARABIA

The desert, bright as a sword  
Pierces the mind and stops the unspoken word.

\* Awarded second prize in the *Sydney Morning Herald* Verse Competition, 1950, now printed as revised by the author.

Here a starving world fell down  
Straddling the white illimitable plain  
With a gigantic skeleton:

These ribbed ridges terribly deployed  
In violence like an agony petrified  
Mark its ruined attitude.

The travelling unwinking eye  
Stared with unvaried fire from the sky  
And shrank the rotten flesh away

Compelling its complexities into a last  
Simple antimony of stone and dust  
Where future is identical with past.

Yet, scarred into the stone  
Like a cancer in the core of an old bone  
Is that vast and humming ferment of corruption.

#### CAIRO HOTEL

A room the size of a warehouse  
With chairs like stick-insects sheltering in corners  
And a wide rhetorical bed.

Like a fruit display from the ceiling  
The chandelier gleamed; four candelabra  
Trophies, stags' heads, stared from the crimson walls.

An airless odour of camphor and fine dust  
In the blank wardrobe, and in the topmost drawer  
A flimsy envelope addressed in French.

The lightswitch fell to pieces under my hand  
There were three bells, for Waiter, Maid, and Valet  
And the traffic trembled all night under the bed

To which, unfortunately, no sequined countess  
Mysteriously came, having perhaps mistaken  
The door, or by an impulse. The great room

Smelling of dryness and impermanence  
Withheld its opportunities: yet I felt  
That, given time there, something would have happened.

## LONDON

As if some irremediable poison  
Were secretly destroying sight, and you stood to watch  
Without even horror, the development of blindness,  
The quiet approach of the horizon

Fading towards you in perpetual twilight—  
So this city and season circumscribe the stranger  
With a mild prison of blues and greys, where darkness  
Is always implied in light,

No view is long, and nothing is sharp or dry:  
A foreshortened landscape, limited by forests  
Of elegant trees or chimneys, formal patterns  
Dovegrey in a dovelike sky.

In the web of a breathing noon,  
The neutrality of a dying world, the streets  
And shadows are elusive as ghosts, and a low infernal  
Sun swims, round as the moon

Till evening in a denser net  
Gathers up sight and sound, soon leaving only  
The bombed wall darkening, and the swollen tree-trunk  
Poisonously green and bursting with the wet.

## COLOGNE

Here many died  
Buried not from hearses  
The echo of their voices  
Fills the darkened carriage  
With a tenuous complaining  
On the border of hearing  
An uneasy language

Slowly the train  
Halts through a station  
Of fallen iron  
And roofless arches  
All who are not living  
Haunt the olive evening  
Where no light watches

The tall cathedral  
Lifts a rigid spire

Over the shore  
Of low grey houses  
The traveller's eyes  
Turn from the gaze  
Of their blinded faces

The lights come on  
In the swaying corridor  
Where we stand smoking  
And pursued by whispers  
Of old disasters  
The train slips quietly  
Through the infected city.

MOSCOW

I

A WINTER LANDSCAPE

How the ice glitters, and snow burns  
In a broad incandescence, the extreme of fire:  
This is full circle, midwinter's frozen furnace  
Which bites the touch and closes up the sight  
Against an intolerable blaze of cold.

The forces are cancelled, as at the core of a storm,  
And the blue and white morning is poised in a razor-edged  
Equilibrium that might instantly explode;  
Held in a singing stillness by the tense  
Invisible understream of linked bells chiming

Out of the cathedral, which turns to the listening town  
Its foursquare faces glowing with pink and ochre  
Much bruised by time. In a strong pulse of ripples  
The bells stream over the hill, the ridged roads  
Where loaded sleighs ride to the blue-fenced market

Twisting above the agony of their runners,  
And flood the hooded ears of the townspeople  
With garbled messages in a dying language.  
From many chimneys smoke paler than incense  
Climbs hand over hand the rigid air.

A vivid light without source  
Equal from sky and snow  
Separates every house

Delineates every tree  
 Makes a fallen twig a statement  
 Irrevocable and precise

Each of that black crowd  
 Swarming to the market  
 Across the luminous hillside  
 Is reduced to a simple and single  
 Fact, a proposition  
 Which cannot be denied  
 And the unbroken current  
 Of bells focuses all  
 The day into a moment  
 Ranging sky and landscape  
 In an unsuspected order  
 An eternal present:

Blue and gold, the domes  
 Inhabit the bright air  
 And above, clear as in dreams,  
 In intricate fine wire  
 Of flame in a deep sky  
 The five crucifixes soar.

## II

The evening air breathes with the spring  
 While cannon boom, and emerald fires  
 Explore the cavern of the sky  
 In soaring manyfingered choirs;

Loudspeakers chanting in the streets  
 Announce to trams important news  
 With indecipherable voice  
 Over the heads of waiting queues.

The prophet Lenin rides the night  
 Suspended from the upper air;  
 The hero Stalin by his side  
 Sustains the searchlight's public glare

Surveying with his canvas eye  
 The lighted city swarm below,  
 Where sounds the litany of praise  
 And hosts of scarlet banners flow.

He chooses now to exercise  
 Beneficent and sovereign powers

## SOUTHERLY

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Providing fireworks and bands  
Icecream carts and paper flowers

The young are dancing in the streets:  
The old within their tenements  
Bend over stoves, or turn their eyes  
Impassive on the night's events—

Do they yet sense through this display  
The roaring of a mighty wind,  
The apocalyptic thunderstorm  
Which bears the future of mankind?

### RETURNING

#### I

##### AT SEA

Colour of light, texture of air  
Shape of water, divided, reunited  
Under the sliding keel

The mobile skin of the sea  
Conforms to the passage of the travelling wave  
Lends itself and returns.

Trembling, in a continual hush  
The ship moves spellbound, throwing before it  
Flowers, a moat of foam

Disguising unimaginable deeps.  
Time whitens without tense; distance  
Is lucid as this air.

#### II

In Paris we saw a marvellous ballet  
About a millionaire who murders his valet  
With a pair of tailor's shears  
They symbolise his secret fears—  
Very modern, you know the sort of thing?  
Everyone walking round and round in a ring.

How long were you over?  
Only five months altogether  
Switzerland, Italy and France  
(Susie met an Italian prince)  
And aren't the shops so wonderful?  
Everything seems to have such style  
Did you go to the Folies Bergere?

Charles Trenet was singing *La mer*  
 Daddy was paying the bills, of course  
     He bought me a Dior cocktail dress  
 We took a car trip down to Rome  
     I thought I'd never want to go home  
 I liked the Italians, though they aren't very clean  
     The Swiss are smug  
     The French are mean  
 They say things are different after the war  
     But of course I hadn't been there before:  
 We didn't have time to do all we wanted  
     But still, we feel pretty contented.  
 Doesn't it alter your point of view?  
     It certainly does, I've changed, I know.  
 I don't know how I'll settle down  
 Sydney seems such a small town.

III

FREMANTLE

New wide clean bright  
 Temporary: a collocation of shacks.  
 Avenues of branched poles; earthscars;  
 Skeins of wires, roofs and shining asphalt  
 Tremble together in the brilliant light.

Here Australia begins: see  
 How luminous the blue air and water,  
 How dark the hills, the trees with a dry sparkle.  
 Pass the Moderne Gift Shoppe, Reg. MacPherson  
 Ern Jones for Bicycles, Kinkara Tea,

Avoid the rolling barrel; pause  
 For the sour smell of the beer, distinctive  
 As the tigerish footballers framed against green tiles.  
 Here is a newspaper; read in its many pages  
 About Shark tragedy, Dave Sands and cricket scores.

Rejoice in butchers' shops, and fruit  
 In pyramid and phalanx on the barrows;  
 Observe the Capitol and Niagara cafes,  
 The men's square-shouldered coats, the elder women's  
 Amazing hats, the children as remote

And delicate as birds; the tone  
 Of voices, and the cadence of their walk.  
 Great clouds like dieties sail an enormous sky

In which it seems the breath of Europe, dense  
With time and wars, humanity and stone

Must instantly dissolve: But see  
The riding moon, which here seems so transparent  
And is shining now on the countries of your sojourn;  
Remember the shadow, which appears unmoving  
Yet joins all continents in a single day.

Now you are home; and soon  
Perhaps, you will feel you have never been away.  
Faintly uneasy, a familiar stranger,  
Look while you can through this clear glass of arrival:  
You will never have quite the same vision again.

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## Suspension

Lying in summer grass while drifting clouds  
Make clear momentary patterns on the bending sky  
The febrile flesh grows hale, and casts its shrouds;  
Time, and all sense of time, slips quietly by:  
The questing mind is still; desire sleeps;  
Reality bursts open like a flower:  
Gahn, beautiful, and wise, the Spirit keeps  
The apprehension of its perfect hour.

In just a little while the mind will wing;  
Thought will disguise this peace, and words will shake  
Like moving fingers on an attempted string;  
The earth will mock the aethereal measure, break  
The flawless pitch, whose joy is but to be  
Within the articulate silence of eternity.

ERNEST BRIGGS

## The Progress of Eleanor Dark

By G. A. WILKES

AMONG Australian women novelists, a companion for Henry Handel Richardson and Katharine Prichard is not easy to find. Christina Stead, in her later work, has "committed formal suicide", M. Barnard Eldershaw have advanced into uncertainty, Kylie Tennant has failed to realise her early promise. There remains Eleanor Dark. A writing career extending over some twenty years has made her the author of eight novels to date, besides fugitive articles and short stories. The time may have come for a developmental review which may establish some perspectives on her work, and serve as an interim report on her progress.

In her career as a novelist, Eleanor Dark has so far traversed three phases. The first is introduced by *Slow Dawning* and consummated in *Return to Coolami*; the second, occupied with *Sun Across the Sky* and *Waterway*, effects a transition; and the third, covering *The Timeless Land*, *The Little Company* and *Storm of Time*, subsumes the earlier tendencies in a fresh departure. While the contrast between the early work and the later is emphatic, the movement from one novel to the next has been fluid: Eleanor Dark has developed by making each successive book "include" the one before it. Though some of her work is therefore repetitive, it nevertheless exhibits continuity and pattern—a pattern which has not yet, of course, been completed.

The author of *Slow Dawning* (1932), *Prelude to Christopher* (1933), and *Return to Coolami* (1935) is best characterised as "efficient". These novels display a talented writer working within consciously imposed limits: she is successful because gauging her deficiencies, she refrains from the exercise of powers she does not possess. The guiding principle of Eleanor Dark's work, in this early phase, is a dread of being uninteresting. She does not deal with average, mundane existence, but with exceptional people, caught at some critical stage in their histories. Events may place a judicious strain on credibility, provided the attention is kept engaged. *Slow Dawning* and *Return to Coolami* thus rely for their interest on an improbable set of romantic entanglements; *Prelude to Christopher* is an excursion into abnormality. On the evidence of these three books, Eleanor Dark might have been dismissed as just another romantic novelist, had she not brought two other powers into operation: a surgeon's skill for probing into the minds of her

characters, and a command of technique which few Australian writers can equal.

The command of technique she seems to have possessed from the outset. Whatever the shortcomings of *Slow Dawning*, it has none of the formal ineptitude of the first novel, and displays something of the intensity that is born of severe compression.\* Then in *Prelude to Christopher*, Eleanor Dark assumes control of the technique of time-shift that has since become so characteristic: the atmosphere of "crisis" is achieved by restricting the action to four days, and gathering in the earlier development by retrospects while the situation works itself out. The method is helpful in curbing the romantic proclivities of the material. Beginning *Prelude to Christopher* in the fifth act, Mrs Dark evades a direct presentation of the fantastic "island" episode: it is given only indirectly, as it lingers in the memories of the characters, like fragments from some previous existence. By the same device the inherent improbabilities of *Return to Coolami* are overcome. The relationship of Jim, Susan and Bret is established as a *prior* situation, influencing the whole course of the narrative without falling within its scope.

As sophistication of technique is unusual in Australian fiction, this aspect of Eleanor Dark's work has been overpraised. Her craftsmanship, in this early period, is largely "slickness". When a writer like Conrad invokes time-shift, it is to escape the convention which ordains that in chronological narrative, one event may be treated only once: Conrad wishes to disengage certain happenings and treat them a number of times, from different standpoints, and makes the dislocations for the sake of a more thorough scrutiny. With Eleanor Dark it is otherwise. She uses time-shift to contract the action to the span of four days, because she is aware that this presentation has more impact; the theme is not more completely expressed by the technique, it is simply made more arresting. The same opportunism is seen in her use of thematic symbols, like the gleaming figure on the bonnet of Drew's Madison. This little rhythm is not set up (as it would be by Proust or Forster) to capture some nuance of which the symphony is capable but the novel is not, to add another dimension to the craft—it is set up for "effect". While the legitimacy of such usage is not in question, one must still distinguish between lower and higher aims.

\* *Slow Dawning* was not published until ten years after it was written; and, under a *nom de plume*, Eleanor Dark had written short stories (and verse) before she turned to the novel. (See Jean Devanney, "Writers at Home: Eleanor and Eric Dark", in *Bird of Paradise*, ch. xvii, and Eric Lowe, "Novelist with World Audience", in *Book News*, September 1946.)

Possibly Eleanor Dark has lived to regret some of her earlier work. She has disowned *Slow Dawning* as a "pot-boiler", written chiefly with an eye to sales. *Prelude to Christopher*, however, was in 1934 awarded the gold medal of the Australian Literature Society, and *Return to Coolami*, accorded the same honour in 1936, is a novel for which no writer need apologize. Eleanor Dark here achieves an equilibrium of the better qualities of her first period: sensitiveness in guiding a psychological development, sureness of emotional control, and a technique so functional that no ounce of energy is squandered. *Return to Coolami* is the most moving and perceptive of the earlier books, successful because its author has set herself a limited objective, and achieved it admirably.

In 1937 *Return to Coolami* was followed by *Sun Across the Sky*, and in 1938 by the sequel *Waterway*. With these two novels, Eleanor Dark's career enters a second phase. Whereas the feature of the earlier work had been its concentration—the sense of an action proceeding in a closed box—the movement now is towards diffusion. In *Sun Across the Sky*, though the focus is still four or five principals caught up in the one situation, the cordon now binding them is not so tight. The characters are more dispersed, and marginal figures like George Minns and Herb Sayers are not grudged their standing-room: there is less sense of a diagram, and a stronger impression of an untidy, actual world. In *Waterway*, the control is further relaxed. Eleanor Dark now attains the method (to be characteristic of every novel henceforth) of working with ten or so characters whose thought streams proceed concurrently, and narrating from the different centres in rotation. It is the system by which she seeks to reconcile width of reference with unity of impression.

The widening of the banks is, however, less significant than the attempt to deepen the stream. The novelist who has hitherto worked so deliberately within her limitations, now makes a conscious effort to exceed them—she becomes an "ambitious" writer. Symptoms of the change are everywhere apparent. The interior monologue, in the first place, ascends to a higher range. The characters' minds take on a speculative bent, petty incidents touching off trains of thought on the nature of art and the goal of humanity. In the relationships of the characters, too, the problems encountered are no longer merely psychological: political loyalties, consciousness of caste and position intrude, and a vein of social criticism appears. In a word, Eleanor Dark is trying to become an "intellectual" novelist.

The development is not altogether fortunate. It is not necessary to follow very far the workings of Oliver Denning's cortex, or to read very many of the passages from Professor Channon's book, to discover that Mrs Dark is no thinker. Much of the soliloquy fails simply because it is undistinguished. Frequently it hampers the movement of a situation, and occasionally it brings the narrative to a paralysed standstill. The quarrel between Arthur and Winifred at the beginning of *Waterway* is representative: the scene at first moves naturally, then the dialogue is suspended:

She looked at him searchingly, with an intentness almost pathetic, willing, in that moment of acute self-reproach, to see his good qualities, and to forget or ignore his bad ones. But she acknowledged a moment later that it was no use trying to separate people into "qualities". The pernicious doctrine of dualism, always trying to divide the invisible! To rend apart that closely knitted, intricately woven, delicately adjusted entity called man. To make him into "mind" and "matter"; "soul" and "body"; "god" and "beast". To endow him with "good qualities" and "bad qualities", when every quality in him drew its vitality from a common source, as every leaf of a tree draws its nourishment from a common root-system. No, all you could truly say of anyone involved a mystery more profound than any dissection and analysis could yield you. Here is a human being—unique. There has never been one exactly like him, there will never be another exactly like him. . . .

The process of thought here is as laboured as its conclusions are harmless, and the whole passage is artificial. Reflections on the mystery of individuality in the midst of a domestic quarrel!†

The new emphasis on social issues, in this second period, exaggerates Mrs Dark's partisanship amongst her characters. As the alliance of wealth and a materialistic outlook is repugnant to her, Sir Frederick Gormley feels her animus in *Sun Across the Sky*; as she is sympathetic to idealism and a disregard of worldly goods, Oliver Denning and Kavanagh are happy in her approval. The partiality at times distorts the characterisation. Roger Blair, for example, the loquacious editor of *The Free Voice*, the impetuous crusader for a national culture, is in *Waterway* regarded by Mrs Dark with a special affection. But as she never convincingly demonstrates Blair's superior qualities, he leaves the impression of sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. As Blair is preferred by Lesley Channon, we perforce revise our estimate of Lesley's intelligence, and her character goes awry. There is a cleavage between

† The pretentiousness of the meditation in the later novels has been shrewdly analysed in an unpublished thesis by Miss Alrene Sykes.

intention and performance. That it is not due to the social theme alone is apparent from the instance of Lois, who in Mrs Dark's estimation is a spirit of a rare order, and who on Mrs Dark's showing has less intelligence than is usually necessary to support life.

It is in her second period, then, that Eleanor Dark's work acquires the distressing unevenness that even now has not quite been smoothed out. On the one hand there is the feeling of a writer entering into a larger possession of her powers, widening and deepening her psychological range. The earlier work had perhaps been a little too adroit: she had been the surgeon with the flashing instruments and the most smartly pressed uniform, but not with the steadiest hand. In *Waterway*, one feels an accession of thought and understanding—more precisely, a growth in the ability to *interpret* character. Eleanor Dark can now live in the mind of Brenda, Winifred's blind daughter; she can so enter into the movements of Lorna Sellman's thought that we understand Lorna's behaviour better than Lorna does; she can occupy the consciousness of Jack Saunders as he sits in the surgery, embarrassed by the appearance of his stained sandshoes against the polished floor, and obscurely angered because he cannot pay for the treatment he is about to ask. Yet on the other hand there is the miscalculation with Blair and Lois, the unconscious bias, the pretentious disquisition.

The technical control is nevertheless still assured—perhaps too assured. Eleanor Dark now resorts to technique to solve non-technical problems. Both *Sun Across the Sky* and *Waterway* magnify a defect glimpsed earlier: the practice of stating a problem in personal terms, allowing it to develop on its own logic up to a point, and then resolving it by the intervention of some extraneous circumstance. Though the use of the Jungaburra exploit in this way proved effective in *Return to Coolami*, the introduction of storms in the other two books of that period had been less convincing, and the use of the fire in *Sun Across the Sky* is less convincing still. In *Waterway*, the habit becomes patent artifice. Both problems posited here—Lesley's dilemma in choosing between Sim and Roger, and Winifred's love for Harnet, thwarted by her marriage to Arthur Sellman—are resolved in this peremptory fashion. Lesley's difficulties are met by the disturbance following the unemployed meeting in the Domain: instead of thinking her problem out in the terms in which it is posed, Lesley makes an intuitive decision for Blair in the stress of the moment. Then the ferry disaster frees Winifred from her impasse. Taking a count of the characters afterward, we discover that Winifred and Harnet were

delayed and missed the boat, that the children caught it but have been rescued, that Lois providentially fell asleep on the wharf—and that providence has been singularly unregardful of Arthur. The inconvenient character is thus despatched from the novel by conveyor-belt; the sympathetic characters are preserved almost intact.

One must record the author's denial that her plots are shaped to any preconceived pattern. "I know that some writers lay out their books, chapter by chapter," she has remarked, "with headings and little plots for each, but I couldn't do that. I never know how my story is going to evolve, what the characters are going to do. . . . It is very harassing, going along blindly and not knowing what will happen next, or whether anything will happen. But it is the only logical way for me to write."† Illuminating as the comment is, it hardly invalidates the criticism. Whatever the process may have been, the critic's concern is with the effect, and it is undeniable that the effect of *Waterway* is of events being marshalled to a plan, of deliberate contrivance. That impression is heightened by the use of the time-shift convention once more in the fourth successive novel. This technique has remained constant while the subjects to which it is applied have been changing, and in *Waterway* it no longer seems the instinctively "right" method for the theme. It is hard to see what is gained by limiting the action to a single day—perhaps Mrs Dark has simply become accustomed to it.

After *Waterway*, she herself apparently felt that it was time to break new ground, for in her next book she becomes a historical novelist. But there was to be one more social novel before she abandoned the vein—*The Little Company* (1945), the central work of the third phase. Some difficulties were encountered in its composition. "Over the following three years [after 1940]", Mrs Dark confesses, "I wrote about another 250,000 words, different attempts at the same novel, and tore them all up. All failures. They just wouldn't go. . . . But eventually I did get on to a book, something featuring the reactions of a group of people to the war."§ The "group of people" is, in the main, a group of doctrinaire socialists. *The Little Company*, however, is less concerned with the people than with the period: it is a study of a malaise, the *Zeitgeist* of the years 1940-3. A recent pronouncement of Mrs Dark's indicates the distance she has travelled: "You might say perhaps that the bad novel may make an *impact* but the good novel makes a *contact*. That the sensational novel can startle

† An interview reported by Jean Devanney, in *Bird of Paradise*, pp. 251-2.

§ *Bird of Paradise*, p. 252.

the reader or excite him, but the good novel will leave him with a feeling that he has been in touch with the scene and the events that are being described."<sup>||</sup> To establish a "contact", to place the reader "in touch" with the people and events described—that is the intention, and in some measure the achievement, of *The Little Company*.

Yet the novel falls short. It is maimed by the inner discord, now much more pronounced than in *Waterway*. While in her first phase Eleanor Dark had given all her attention to the psychological movement, and while in her second she had divided it between this and the social theme, in *The Little Company* she divides her energy unequally: neglecting the psychological plot, where her real talent lies, she engrosses herself in the outer history and the socialist issues, where her success is but intermittent. That is, she is here writing strongly against the current of her ability. *The Little Company*, even more than *Waterway*, is a novel which will be valued most by its readers for the qualities its author valued least. Eleanor Dark has not since resumed the social theme.

In 1938 she had contributed an article on "Caroline Chisholm and her Times" to *The Peaceful Army*, and this foray seems to have awakened an interest in Australian history. "I was reading up a lot of early historical material," she has explained, "and scattered throughout many books I found allusions to the man Bennilong. From them all the personality of the man gradually emerged and gripped me . . . I collected all the items and began to weave a story about him. And I couldn't write about Bennilong without writing about his environment, and so the book took shape."<sup>¶</sup> The book was *The Timeless Land* (1941), a chronicle of the foundation and early struggles of the colony.

Allied to *The Little Company* in its approach—the attempt to give not a plot, but a pattern of living—*The Timeless Land* continues the process of diffusion begun in *Sun Across the Sky*. Though it may have been envisaged as the story of Bennilong, its true protagonist—as more than one has noted—is the timeless land itself. Applying the system of rotating points of view, Eleanor Dark shows the growth of the colony as seen by the Governor (Phillip), by a free settler (Mannion), by a subaltern (Tench), by a convict (Prentice), by a native (Bennilong), by the second generation (Patrick Mannion), until all social strata are represented. The impersonal history of the settlement is given as an

<sup>||</sup> "What Makes a Good Novel?", symposium broadcast from 2BL, 19 March, 1951.

<sup>¶</sup> *Bird of Paradise*, p. 252.

aspect of these personal histories, so that Mrs Dark both avoids a complete surrender to the amorphousness of the chronicle form, and manages, in some degree, to dramatize an undramatic subject.

The simple theme of the growth of the colony is then complicated by other themes. The impact of the white culture on the natives is dwelt upon, and the conflict is treated—unfortunately perhaps—in ideological terms. The natives are secure in the rhythm of their tribal life, their customs and values sanctioned by tradition as far back as memory can reach, and the invasion throws them into a spiritual crisis. They cannot be left in dumb bewilderment: each is supplied with a mind as agile as Oliver Denning's, so that they spend sleepless nights formulating the terms of the dilemma, after the manner of Bennilong, who "restless and wakeful upon his 'possum rugs . . . watched the stars till they faded, and wrestled with the chaos in his heart". Thoughts are assigned to the natives of which they could never have been aware, and the treatment is sentimental. All the qualities of meanness and treachery in the settlement belong exclusively to the whites; the aborigines live in guileless innocence. All unwittingly, Eleanor Dark subscribes to the myth of the Noble Savage.

She is on the brink of a precipice in handling another of these overtones—the feeling between the intruders and the inscrutable continent they have violated. The land is silent and impassive, it was there before Caesar invaded Britain and will be there for centuries still—this is the note. With irritating frequency, the characters suspend their activities to ponder the phenomenon. Most of the responsibility falls on Phillip. He stands on the deck of the *Supply* watching the twilight fade into night (a simple enough matter) and as the continent engulfs the ship in "the majestic silence of its antiquity", inevitably his thoughts turn to "timelessness":

There was no sense of Time here. To-night—was it Now, or a thousand years ago? What was it in the life of a man which gave him that reassuring sense of the passage of Time? On his little journey from the cradle to the grave, how comforting to feel that Time moves forward with him—how chilling, how strange, how awesome, to feel, as one felt here, that Time was static, a vast, eternal, unmoving emptiness through which the tiny pathway of one's life ran from darkness into darkness, and was lost!

Two paragraphs more, and Phillip has roused himself sufficiently to sigh and give a slight shiver, then the wheels resume their motion. Earnest as it is, the everlasting commentary steadily chokes the life

from the novel. All of Mrs Dark's undoubted powers are present in the narrative, but not developed—too much energy is dissipated in the tedious cerebration. The choice of *The Timeless Land* by the American Book of the Month Club suggests that it is not only Australian critics who may be intimidated by fiction of the "saga" type.

The sequel, *Storm of Time* (1948) extends the chronicle from the departure of Phillip to the Bligh rebellion, the interregnum of the N.S.W. Corps intervening. The expansion of the colony now makes the pseudo-mysticism of the unknown continent and the interaction of black and white less prominent, and the emphasis shifts to colonial society, bond and free, military and civilian. The presentation through multiple viewpoints continues, and as in *The Timeless Land* the aboriginal consciousness had been used by the author to appraise the penal system, in *Storm of Time* she uses the ingenuous mind of Conor Mannion, brought from a sheltered life in Ireland to become the mistress of Beltrasna. Again the social organisation is scrutinised, to the discomfort of the privileged classes, and as the spectacle of convictism sets Conor's mind grappling naïvely with the meaning of words like "freedom", her associates feel the consequences of her original thinking: "Where there is so much land, and it produces so abundantly—why should there be poverty?" The persistence of the strain of social criticism may be detected here, as the persistence of the romantic strain may be seen in the story of Johnny Prentice. *Storm of Time* is another "serious" work.

It is nevertheless an advance on *The Timeless Land*. Admittedly there is still no sustained piece of characterization. Obedience to history requires the absence of the most promising character, Macarthur, for a long stretch of the narrative, and cuts short the sojourn of Hunter and King, while the system of rotating points of view makes every character for the moment as important as every other. Still there is a progression. As the background is now more taken for granted, the human relationships start to detach themselves from it. The best writing in *Storm of Time* is found in the treatment of the feuds and animosities of the colony, in the collision of personalities like Bligh and Macarthur, in the portraiture of Mannion and King. Eleanor Dark has now attained the quality she has defined as "balance"—recognition that all situations are not "plain black versus plain white", and that "human beings are all a mixture of good and bad—which is what makes

them interesting".\*\* Sir Frederick Gormley and Gerald Manning-Everett—the very names betray hostility—are superseded by Stephen Mannion, dispassionately presented.

This development in *Storm of Time* may be prophetic. Eleanor Dark is still in a quandary. The kind of novel she can write well, like *Prelude to Christopher*, no longer satisfies her; the kind of novel she wants to write, she has not yet achieved. As *The Little Company* has had no successor, she is apparently committed to the historical field. Perhaps another historical novel, where the setting may be simply assumed and the attention given to the personalities—possibly a full-length study, as Macquarie succeeds Bligh—perhaps this will be the theme she has so long been seeking. No student of her development would claim that she cannot reach the goal, only that she so far has not. As Eleanor Dark is still in the midst of her writing career, the proviso is important.

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## Clair De Lune

This pale and shafted light spun by the moon  
And from her calm and silent loom unwound  
Is like the soft and undulating shroud  
Of buried empires in forgotten tombs.

And we at last, when we are cut asunder  
From the harsh burning labours of the day,  
Shall feel ourselves caressed in unfelt graves  
And thus sleep gently, wrapped in woven slumber.

R. H. MORRISON

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\*\* "What Makes a Good Novel?", symposium broadcast from 2BL, 19 March, 1951.

## The Only One Who Forgot

By T. A. G. HUNGERFORD

ON a smooth rock that jugged out of a deep clear pool in the reef, a black boy sat and idly watched the flashing gulls stab into a school of mackerel in the shallows off-shore. They scattered the water into flung diamonds as they struck, and filled the air with their thin, savage cries. Far out, the big boomers thundered on the edge of the reef, and at his feet the water slid hissing over the coarse sand, clucking and sucking in the holes, never still, never silent; behind him, at the other end of the gleaming white shell road, the little town slumbered already in the golden threat of mid-day heat, not quite alive, but not quite dead. It was all he had ever known, this rock, this beach, this sea and this little town, and he was content, when his work at the hotel was done, to sit and watch the luggers come in, and the great clouds roll over the edge of the world.

Hearing a sound behind him, a gentle, furtive sound like a goanna stirring in grass, he turned around quickly. A little girl stood on the sand looking up at him—the bright glare of the coral sand made her wrinkle her eyes and her nose, and her mouth was screwed up into a tight little red dot of conjecture. Her skin, he saw, was pale gold, and soft pale curls bobbed on her shoulders beneath a big straw hat.

"Hello, boy," she said brightly. "You see any ships?"

The black boy jumped from his rock and stood beside her. "No," he replied gravely, "no ships. O'ny luggers, sometimes."

He spoke the language of the hotel and the Post Office, unaccented, the language of Miss Bella and Bob Mayo and Dan, the mailman. It was the only sort he ever heard, apart from occasional travellers staying overnight at the hotel; to anyone else but the little girl standing at his side, it would have sounded strangely out of place on his thick, plum-coloured lips.

"There's plenty of ships where I come from." She stooped to pick up a shell, and held it against her ear, listening intently, listening for a moment to the sigh of the wind and the ghosts of tales that the great waves had breathed into it. "Down Perth, that is. Where'd you come from, boy?"

The black boy frowned slightly, for he didn't rightly know where

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he came from. He couldn't know, and nobody had thought to tell him, that he had been brought back to the settlement one day twelve years ago by the mail-man and deposited, a smelly little bundle of rags and bright eyes, in the kitchen of the Royal, the only pub in hundreds of miles of that barren nor'west coastline. Dan, who had found him, was a bachelor, so took him to Miss Bella.

"Poor little cow," was her comment when Dan deposited the picaninny on the cool linoleum of the floor. "What is it, Dan, a he or a she?"

"A little buck—found 'im bellerin' his head orf 'longside a bit of a swamp a few miles out. I dunno—his mammy might'a been took with a 'gator, or somethin', but there wasn't no niggers around. I brought 'im in—couldn't leave 'im there."

"No, a course not—how old is he, Dan, d'you reckon?"

"I dunno," the mailman replied, removing his wide felt hat and scratching his head. "'Bout three, I guess. Give 'im some tucker, Bell."

Miss Bella moved over to the cooler. "What you going to do with him?" she demanded.

"Aw—I dunno. 'E c'n live at the Post Office, until 'is mob comes in for 'im."

"Well, I suppose that'll be all right—what you going to call him?"

Dan's eyes roved over the ceiling in search of inspiration and lighted on a bottle on top of the dresser.

"Brandy!" he said with a dry chuckle. "That's a bonzer name, Brandy Smith!"

"It'll do," the woman said, with a wry grimace. "He won't be here long enough for it to stick, anyway!"

But no mob came in looking for the picaninny, and he stayed on to live with Dan, doing odd jobs around the Post Office and occasionally, when he got old enough, cutting the wood at the Royal and sweeping out the bar. Through the years, his mind forgot, and his heart forgot, the thousand nomad lives that dreamed in his blood.

He frowned again, deeply, but the little girl didn't press her question. She picked a limpet off the rock with her fingernail and made the universal approach of childhood. "My name's Shelagh," she said engagingly. "What's your's, boy?"

"Brandy," said the black boy.

She laughed, a high, silvery sound, and a gull wheeling near sheered

off into the higher air. "Brandy?" she cried. "That's not a name—it's something you drink!"

"It's my name," he insisted, without heat. "Dan gave it to me. You know, Dan at the Post Office. You've come to live at the pub, haven't you? You're Mr Bob's little girl, from Perth?"

"Yes. I've been at school there, and I only got here last Sat'd'y, but I've been down the beach every day—where've you been?"

The boy pointed towards the horizon. "On a lugger," he said, shortly. "Been out three days."

"Oh, are you a sailor?" The little girl looked at him with renewed interest. "Can you swim?"

"Course. You watch!"

He helped her up on to the rock, where without self-consciousness, he peeled off his jersey. Beneath it, the skin was lustrous black, smooth and glowing and hairless, and as he raised his arms above his head, the smooth forming muscles rippled over his ribs and down his back. He plunged into the water, and the girl watched him, breathless. The water was clear and she could see his black body, strangely fluid and distorted, snaking around the rocks on the bottom like a long black fish; sometimes it disappeared wholly, only to float into view again from some shadowy little cavern, and sometimes he would turn slowly over on his back and send a great wobbling bubble of air up to break the surface with a fat plop. Then all of a sudden, his black head burst out into the sunshine, showering glittering drops in every direction. He shook it violently, smiling a broad, happy grin.

"Oh, Brandy, you are good!" The child clapped her hands excitedly, the long curls dancing on her shoulders. Brandy laughed aloud, turned like a seal in the water and swam lazily back to drag himself out easily and lie beside her in the hot sunshine.

"You like perclums?" he inquired, and put his hand into a pocket of his ragged khaki shorts.

"Perclums?" she said. "I don't know—why?"

He pulled several small weed-furred shells from his pocket and sat up. "You look," he said, placing one of them under her small nose. "You see him—a little blue feller?"

She could see it now, a tiny button of blue enamel that closed the shell-fish's front door. The boy placed his long finger-nail under it and flipped it into her lap. She squealed with pleasure.

"Oh, isn't it pretty! I could make a necklace out of them—get me some more!"

The black boy grinned, slid noiselessly into the pool and disappeared. He came up at long intervals to breathe, and then disappeared again. Shelagh could see him most of the time and watched fascinated, clapping every time his black arm reached up to deposit a heap of the shells on the rock. When she had a glowing pile of the little blue buttons he crawled on to the rock and sat beside her, watching her as she rolled them in her handkerchief and placed them carefully under a ledge. When she looked up, he said casually: "I know a bonser cave—you like to see it?"

Together they picked their way across the exposed reef, which was all enchantment. In shallow pools in the rocks, scarlet and green flags of weed floated lazily, anemones spread their greedy plum-coloured lips on the still water and sea-urchins drilled meticulously with their long scarlet spines: tiny, multi-coloured crabs scuttled in panic around them, and beneath the ledges there were shells of all colours and shapes, spotted and spiked, some with green pearly sheen on their insides and some that had two beady eyes and two daintily curved claws poking out at the front door. The day was all brightness and cool salty wind, the sky a limitless blue and the sea a peacock's tail that touched the sky's rim out beyond the reef. Gulls wheeled and screamed, and great black divers sat like lacquered birds on the rocks, holding out their wings to dry. The beach shimmered in the heat and noon-time quiet put its fingers against the lips of the white town in the hollow.

"Where you been, Shely—it's after lunch!" When the child stepped into the cool cavern of the hotel kitchen from the glare of the yard, Miss Bella almost shouted the question at her. She was making bread, with Mayo standing beside her; she watched the girl intently, blowing hard at a strand of mousy hair that hung over her forehead.

"Down to the beach, Miss Bella." Shelagh skipped to the table and held out the flags of crimson weed she had brought home with her. "Hullo, Daddy. Look what—"

"Who you been with?" the woman demanded.

"With Brandy. He knows all the best places, and catches crabs and things for me. He showed me a cave, and he says he'll always be there when I go down."

"A cave . . . ?" The woman glared at the child's father and mut-

tered, mouthing the words rather than saying them, "See, you fool!" Then she walked around the table to where the child stood. The man followed her with his eyes, slid his gaze from her to the little girl, watching almost apprehensively as the woman approached her. I should have sold out up here and gone down to be near her, he thought. I don't even know her, or what to say to her or what to do for her. But as he thought, he knew that he could never live away from the hot little town, the trembling boom of the surf and the gleaming miles of beach that stretched away into the shimmering heat haze until sea and sky and sand all met in a shifting mirage. He couldn't forego the talks with the drovers and cattlemen from the vast wild plains behind the red ranges east of the town, the mad miners who came in from the desert with their earnest tales about lost reefs in some forgotten gorge where the gold stuck out of the rock in lumps and you were lucky if you got away from the niggers—the pearlers who anchored in the bay sometimes to escape the cockeyed-bobs that sprang up so suddenly along those desolate, treacherous coasts. They came into the bar, nights, and in the flickering light of hurricane lanterns, traced their rough maps in the beer on the counter, produced their little nuggets and tobacco tins of gold dust, their round, white, iridescent pearls, and talked far into the night while outside the surf drummed against the reef and the soft darkness was stabbed by a furious gusher of great yellow stars that sprayed across the black sky. He couldn't leave it, and live—breathe, perhaps, but never live.

The woman stopped beside the child, rubbed the dough off her hands and picked up one of the big shells.

"Put it to your ear, and hear the sea!" Shelagh cried, excited and pleased to share her secret. "You listen—you c'n hear the wind and the waves, and everything!" Miss Bella looked down into the shining eyes and smiled gently, put the shell to her ear and stood in the gloomy kitchen and listened to the sea. She sighed.

"Shelagh," she said presently, "I don't want you to go down the beach with Brandy again. You can play at the pub, or wait until he's busy. Don't go down with him."

Mayo shrugged uncomfortably. "God, Bella," he muttered, "the boy's all right!"

She shut him up with a glare. "D'you hear me, Shelagh?" she demanded.

The child looked at them in amazement. "Why, Miss Bella! Brandy c'n swim and everything. He gets me perclums—oh!"

She stopped sharply and her distress showed plainly on her face.

"What is it? What's the matter?" The woman cried with strange urgency. "Oh—what?"

"My perclums. I left them on the rock!"

"Oh, is that all!" There was undisguised relief in the woman's voice, and she avoided Mayo's half-triumphant glance. "You can get them another time, when Brandy's not there."

"But, why, Miss Bella?" the child demanded, almost tearfully. "Why when Brandy's not there?"

"Well, he might hurt you," Miss Bella said lamely, and Mayo muttered inaudibly, shaking his head and shrugging impatiently. "He might knock you over and steal your purse, or something. You can't always trust a black."

Black? The child looked at her, uncomprehendingly, and then at her father. To her, Brandy was Brandy, who dived off the rock and shook his head like a woolly dog in the water, who got perclums and caught crabs, and who had showed her the cave in the rocks. She wrinkled her brow and said in a puzzled tone: "But, Miss Bella, I don't take my purse down the beach!"

The woman lost patience. "Purse or no purse," she cried sharply, "you'll do as you're told, my lady. You *won't* go to the beach again with Brandy, d'you hear, and that's final! Now, get them shells off the table, an' don't let me have to speak to you about it again. Now, get!"

Shelagh ran from the kitchen almost in tears, and the man and the woman stood in silence and watched her go. In her room she snivelled for a while, and then comforted herself by laying the weed and the shells across her bed, idly making a pattern. Soon, the enchantment of the morning flowed over her again, and she stood with a shell against her ear and let the imprisoned song of the sea wash away the memory of Miss Bella's threats.

It was dark and cool in the kitchen, when she crept through it after her afternoon nap. The blinds were drawn, and Miss Bella was upstairs having a lie-down. She took her hat from the peg and ran into the sunny yard. The afternoon was a virgin sheet on which she might write anything she fancied, and the few golden hours left to the day were limitless—before tea, she would have time enough to go around

the world. There was a lonely pig in a sty behind the sandstone garage; wrinkling her nose at the odour surrounding him, she wandered down and spent some minutes idly throwing stones at him until he charged the fence, whereupon she retired with a pleasurable thrill of danger. At the kitchen door she knelt and gathered the crimson berries of the pepper-corn tree, and then with a headlong decision of childhood, did what she knew she would do, all the time. There was no sound from the hotel, and the yard and the white road outside it were deserted. With a quick glance at the window of Miss Bella's room, she slipped out at the gate and ran down the road towards the beach.

The black boy, sitting on the rock beside the pool, jumped lightly to the sand and stood waiting for her.

"Brandy," she said without preamble when she stood beside him, "what's a black?"

"I dunno, Miss Shely," he replied uncertainly, and then, brightening, "look, Miss Shely—I got something for you." He stooped and took a grubby bundle of paper from a ledge at the base of the rock and handed it to her. "You have a look!"

Shelagh unwrapped the parcel and stood transfixed. It contained a small pearl-shell, the rough edges smoothed away, the lustrous sheen of its inside surface gleaming with all the sea's cool colours in the bright sunshine.

"Oh, Brandy, isn't it lovely!" she breathed. "I'll keep it till I die, I promise I will. Did you make it?"

The black boy's eyes danced with pleasure, and every gleaming tooth was displayed as he grinned. "Yeah," he said, "I done it—I smoothed it off with a file. You like it, eh?"

"It's beautiful." She wrapped it again reverently. "Thank you. Miss Bella'll like it, too."

"I know." The boy's eyes shone. "She's always looked after me, like my mother. I live at the pub, too, sometimes."

The little girl looked at him, suddenly remembering something. "Brandy," she said, "Miss Bella listened to the shell. She was cross, and she said I mustn't come and play with you. It's silly, isn't it?"

The black boy wrinkled his heavy forehead. "Why?" he demanded.

"She said you might take my purse, or something. That's silly, too, because I don't bring my purse, do I?"

Brandy turned and looked out at the sun-splintered sea. His soft eyes were clouded and his heavy brow wrinkled again as he wrestled

with what he had just heard. Miss Bella . . . when he spoke again, his voice was rough and harsh.

"Miss Bella—why'd she say that? I don't steal!"

Shelagh stepped back, her hand at her lips. "Brandy," she said uncertainly, "you aren't cross, too, now, are you?"

He turned and looked at her closely. Gradually his eyes cleared as her presence blotted out what his brain had been vainly trying to encompass. "No, not cross, Miss Shely," he said eventually. "We'll get your perclums, eh?" He smiled as she placed her hand in his and tugged him towards the pool.

The afternoon wore on and cooled while they pottered around the reef, collecting the shells and crabs and every pretty thing that took the little girl's fancy. Brandy was tireless in pleasing her, and his eyes shone as he watched her, fair head bent, peering at the wonders in the depths of some clear pool or excitedly manoeuvring a tiny crab or fish into a corner for capture. She looked up suddenly, dismayed.

"Oh, Brandy, I've got to go! It must be getting late, and Miss Bella'll be cross again!"

"Orright, we'll race to the road, eh?" The boy stood up while she gathered the silk scarf, the shells and the seaweed and the pearlshell, and then with a squeal of excitement, scampered up the beach. He dropped behind purposely to let her gain a lead.

Suddenly, before she had gone far, she sprawled headlong, and with a shrill cry of pain, clutched at her knee. All about her, little blue specks on the creamy sand, lay the perclums; the pearl shell, shed of its wrappings, gleamed in the hot sunshine, and for a moment, the red spurt of her blood showed almost indistinguishable from the scarlet weed she had dropped. She whimpered at first, and then when she saw the blood flow, she opened her mouth to its fullest extent and howled like a dog baying the moon, great long quivering howls that carried well and stopped only for breath in between.

Miss Bella heard it on her way to the beach, stopped and stood stock still, almost smelling the wind, glaring in the direction of the sound. Her mind conjured up a picture not of the girl, but of the black boy, his brown eyes and hair, his thick lips, his satiny black skin and his strong boy's body, so soon to be a man's. She had nursed him and cuddled him, even loved him, but now—black boy and white girl! She gave a short, dry sob, almost of terror, and started to run.

Brandy hurried around the corner of a shelf of rock with a streamer

of bright weed and a crab held by its two long claws. As he saw the blood, he dropped them and knelt on the sand alongside the child.

"Why, don' cry, Miss Shely," he murmured tenderly, as many a time Miss Bella had murmured to him. "It's on'y a little cut, look!"

He leaned over her gingerly and touched her knee with his black finger; the nail was long and filbert-shaped and startlingly pink, and in between the fingers the skin was creamy brown. "There," he said softly. Right beneath his nose the light fair hair curled on the little girl's sunburnt neck. The child turned and put her arms around his neck and howled against his faded jersey.

Brandy's arms strayed helplessly in the air, and then came to rest softly, naturally, on her shoulders. "Don' you cry," he murmured. "It's all right. Don' cry!"

Miss Bella came down the white track, and stopped when she saw them squatting in the sand. Her hand went to her breast.

"Shelagh!" she screamed. The gulls wheeling in the fathomless blue sky answered her hoarsely. The black boy watched her as she ploughed through the thick shimmering sand, her black skirt held above her flaccid calves, her bosom heaving. She stopped a yard away from them; her face was crimson and a pulse beat wildly in her neck.

"You!" she flung hoarsely at him, and hate and fear burned in the word. Behind him, the white sand sloped evenly to the soft green shallows, and then there was spread the deep blue and the flashing white where the great combers crashed on to the black reef. Beyond that, to the edge of the world and beyond, the vast, timeless sea. The salty wind and the sunshine wrapped them around, the gulls, like silver boomerangs, swooped and soared, splashed and soared again, and at the end of the white road the half-dozen buildings of the little town gleamed almost unbearably in the late afternoon heat. Yet she saw only thick lips and black hair and heavy jutting forehead, the puzzled frown in the brown eyes, the black hands on the girl's shoulders.

"You—!" she spat at him again, and catching the child's hand, yanked her roughly to her feet. "Get home, Shelagh!"

Brandy clambered to his feet. "Why, Miss Bella—"

She swung her hand across his mouth, hard. The blood ran from his lips, and he stood still, his fingers creeping slowly along his jaw. The woman's eyes blazed.

"Nigger!" she cried, shrill with fear. "Black, damned nigger!"

Unaccustomed tears swam in the boy's troubled eyes. At the sight

of them, her hand fled, as his had, to her mouth; she seemed to shrink inside her black dress, and stood staring at him with dilated eyes.

"Why, Miss Bella—" he began again, but without a word she turned and trudged across the sand, dragging the little girl by the hand.

The boy's black fingers touched his lips, at last. He stared dully at their smeared tips, and then at the blackened patch on the sand where the girl's blood had dried and caked hard. The ghosts of a million years postured all about him, grimacing, daubed with mud and blood and feathers, gleaming with sacred kidney-fat, crying to the unresponsive blood that pounded in his questioning heart. Only he could not hear, did not see. Only he had forgotten. Little crabs scuttled across his bare feet, carrying off the scarlet weed he had dropped, but he did not move. He stood staring up the white road where Miss Bella and the little girl had disappeared in the direction of the white town.

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## The Swan

From what forsaken haven sheltered by pines,  
In search of what far haven yet unlit  
By the moon's timeless and hospitable glow,  
Do you wing your solitary way across these wastes  
With mournful voice like the essence of a hundred flutes?

Are you in search of those others from that same shore  
Who flew this way through the chill night air, calling  
Perhaps to you, to join their arrow-head of desire  
Aimed at the half-dreamt target of the lake?

From the window I see you come, and hear your call,  
And reach with my whole soul of longing ablaze,  
And watch you pass across the moon's frame and away,  
While night closes up and the silence is heard again.

R. H. MORRISON

## Australian Literary Magazines\*

By R. G. HOWARTH

I shall begin by asking, What is a magazine? and go on to the further question, What constitutes a literary magazine? It's necessary to clear the way so that we may understand what we're speaking of, and what its limits are. Otherwise we shall fall into complications and confusions, or even get right off the track.

Now what does the word "magazine" mean? Well, essentially it's a storehouse or repository, so that we have first the ideas of gathering, keeping and holding together. When written material is accumulated and printed within the one set of covers, we have a magazine for reading. Of course *selection* of material is implied too, and further, there must be *regular* selection and publication, under the same general title, for the work to be distinguished from a miscellany, an anthology, or any other sort of one-issue compilation. But the question then arises, *How* regularly? Once a week? Once a month? Once every six months? Once a year? Or what? I'd say that we must rule out the two extremes. A publication brought out at short intervals—say up to a week, and perhaps even a fortnight—is a journal (though strictly journal means a daily)—or, shall we say, a newspaper. On the other hand, a publication issued once a year is an annual. Call it an annual *magazine* if you like, but I prefer to restrict the term to monthlies and quarterlies. This is the sense in which it was understood for the well-known periodicals of earlier times—the *Gentleman's Magazine*, *Blackwood's*, the *Quarterly*, the *Cornhill*, and so on. A month is enough to allow of a reasonable accumulation of matter which is to be printed, a quarter makes for more considered choice; so that probably the truest type of magazine is the quarterly. It's distinguished on the one side from the newspaper or journal, which aims at up-to-the-minuteness or at the least up-to-dateness; and on the other side from the annual, which presents only items of year-long interest. A quarter, too, is a good substantial period, but not too lengthy. Let us call the typical magazine, then, a quarterly.

Now what constitutes a *literary* magazine? The term is used very loosely. At the extreme it may mean simply a publication full of reading-matter, on all conceivable subjects. It may even have no reference to

\* A script prepared for the Australian Broadcasting Commission's Commonwealth Jubilee series on Australian literature.

literature, as we understand the term—that is, the *best* of the reading-matter, judged from presentation, style, originality and other qualities. I think this is a misuse of the term “literary magazine”. No matter what the subjects may be, a literary magazine, to be worthy of the name, should be well-written, well-presented. The several items should be able to stand on their own, *irrespective of their subjects*, as *pieces of expression* in words. Under this definition a literary magazine may deal with art, politics, science, economics, technology, languages—anything at all, so long as each article is a piece of literature, or comes up to accepted standards of literary art. Though it doesn’t consistently measure up to these standards, the *Australian Quarterly* would be a good example. It’s run by a political science association but contains articles on a variety of topics, including poetry and drama. But a magazine of this general literary sort which introduces reproductions of pictures and other works of art, prints music, or at the other extreme becomes too technical on politics, economics, science or whatever it may be, runs the risk of degenerating into a mere miscellany, a hotch-potch without plan or direction.

The truest sense in which the term “literary” magazine may be employed, however, is: relating entirely to literature. That is to say, it publishes both original literary matter in the form of stories, poems, plays and other imaginative writings, and criticisms and discussions of existing literary works. In brief, such a magazine is both creative and critical. And in it there’s room too for the scholarship of literature—for biography of writers, for interpretations of text, for the study of relationships, and so on. Such magazines are naturally rarer than the other kind, which appeal to a wider variety of readers. In fact, they tend to become specialist or group organs. But in Australia they do no more, as a rule, than tend. There is as yet no purely scholarly periodical, and the few literary-movement or restricted publications, such as *Angry Penguins* or *Poetry* of a few years back, have not lasted very long. The representative at the moment of the pure literary magazine class is *Southerly*, which was founded in 1939 and has developed into a quarterly concerned mainly with Australian writing, noted especially for its encouragement and criticism of poetry. One of its chief unwritten tenets is that there exists a substantial and growing body of literature produced by our own writers, which is in need of analysis and critical sifting, which also deserves to be widely known. As a quarterly *Southerly* does not aim to keep up with the moment, yet it is never far behind.

The other extant magazine, *Meanjin*, which is nearly as old as *South-*

erly, began as a verse monthly and though it became a quarterly has always retained some touch with current affairs. At times it may run the risk of neglecting the immediate past. There is also a tendency to dispersion into fields other than literature. The contributions and influence, however, of Vance and Nettie Palmer, two of our distinguished writers, at least mean that this magazine makes a steady addition to the body of Australian creative work, especially short stories.

So far I've been concerned chiefly with literary magazines of the present. What of the past? Well, for one hundred and thirty years our history is strewn with the wrecks of such ventures, from the *Australian Magazine*, first of that name, in 1821, to *Barjai*, the youth magazine, which faded out only recently, and numbers of others which bloomed into one issue and instantly dropped. The story of the magazines (plus the literary sections of some newspapers) is almost the story of literary writing in Australia. The centre at first is, naturally, Sydney, then in the sixties comes a development in Melbourne that attracts writers thither. Henry Kendall, for one, went from Sydney to the thriving new southern capital, where monthly magazines like *Melbourne Punch* were already giving opportunities for the use of their talents to Marcus Clarke and Adam Lindsay Gordon. During the seventies, after the formation of the Yorick Club group, Melbourne became the literary metropolis of Australia. But gradually the group broke up, and when in 1880 Archibald founded the *Bulletin* in Sydney and set himself to attract both writers and artists as contributors and staff members, the centre shifted back. The nineties saw a great efflorescence of magazines—another (and perhaps the most noted) *Australian*, the *Centennial*, *Norman Lilley's* and many more; but perhaps the first decade or two of the new century was their heyday, when the *Bulletin* produced also the *Lone Hand*, and when the *Triad*, the *Bookfellow* and others came into being, all in Sydney. Many attempts were made by Melbourne to regain the literary supremacy, and there were of course writers of great influence there—among poets Bernard O'Dowd, among playwrights Louis Esson, among novelists Vance Palmer, among critics Walter Murdoch. The development now lay in the direction of smaller, non-commercial magazines, such as the *Spinner*, *Manuscripts*, *Desiderata*, *Stream*, *Verse*, *Bohemia*, *Birth*; a class which was numerous in the twenties. One or two valiant ventures were made in Sydney—for instance the *New Triad* and *Vision*, that notable quarterly which, under the aegis of Norman Lindsay, started a new movement in Australian aesthetics and led to the *London Aphrodite*. I think it may be said with justice however, that

the literary balance was then adjusted between the two cities, and that they remain the twin capitals of letters in Australia. The *Bulletin* is a national rather than a local journal (and as a weekly with literary sections it barely comes within our scope, for all its great effect on literature), whilst the extant literary quarterlies, the one established in Melbourne, the other in Sydney, are wide in scope and appeal. Adelaide had its brief flutter with *Angry Penguins*, Brisbane occasionally gives birth to a one-issue magazine, but for the most part the writers in these cities and the States they represent attach themselves to the regular publications. There may be said to exist an element of healthy rivalry between Victoria and New South Wales, with perhaps a rather stronger tendency on the part of Victoria to exaggerate its writers' merits and achievements, and a common determination to advance, both here and abroad, the cause of Australian letters. One thing seems certain: that the public interested in Australian literature—presumably the same as the listeners to this series of broadcasts—is (and may remain) relatively small but is constant and sincere in its feeling. It is no flattery to claim that the readers of our best works and of our leading magazines are a select body, which is not to imply that they are consciously superior to others. Editors of literary magazines everywhere find that their support—and ultimately the support of literature in the making—comes from the few steady discriminating subscribers and purchasers. Even the leading English literary magazine of before the war, the *Criterion*, edited by no less a person than T. S. Eliot, the outstanding poet of our time, sold no more than 1000 copies a number, throughout the world. Proportionately to population, then, Australia has nothing to be ashamed of in this way. It has always given its measure of support and encouragement to literary magazines, to writers, of any vigour, and in the last resort survival depends on the editors and writers themselves. There is no reason to think, then, that the future will be markedly different from the past. The continuance of present publications seems assured, and it is to be hoped that others, expressing different sides of Australian life and culture, will join them and by reasonable competition keep the original stimulus active, writers alert and the public interested. And on this occasion we might particularly recall the *Centennial Magazine* of 1888. Shall we see, before the year is out, a literary periodical specially founded to mark the fiftieth year of the life of our Commonwealth? One can think of worse forms of commemoration.

# Writer and Reader

## ANCIENT TALES RETOLD

*The Region of the Summer Stars.* By Charles Williams. (Cumberlege: Oxford University Press, 1950. 9s. 6d.)

*The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Graunia.* By J. Redwood Anderson. (Cumberlege: Oxford University Press, 1950. 16s. 6d.)

In Charles Williams' *The Region of the Summer Stars* and Redwood Anderson's *The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Graunia*, both brought out by the Oxford University Press last year, we have two lengthy poems which, at first sight, appear rather similar. On closer examination, however, they provide some interesting contrasts. The outward form of each consists of a reworking in blank verse of legendary material: the Taliessin myth which is linked to the "Matter of Britain" cycle of the Arthurian legend, in the case of Williams' poem, and the Diarmuid and Graunia (Grainne) story from the Irish Finn or Ossianic cycle in the case of Redwood Anderson's. Except insofar as long poems based on Britain's legendary past—as distinct from the evocative or symbolic use of myth in oblique reference—are rather unusual, neither of these poems breaks new ground: I feel that, apart from a possible Eliot influence traceable in *The Region of the Summer Stars*, either poem could have been written at any time since the end of the last century.

There the resemblance ends: Williams' purpose is to write a philosophical and religious poem, while Redwood Anderson is wholly concerned with the telling of a very human love story in an easy narrative manner. With regard to the very different purposes of the two poets, it is enlightening to note how they have manipulated their chosen legends. Charles Williams, as a Catholic poet and literary critic, views intellectual concepts, particularly religious ones, with a sort of mystical exaltation, which he is sometimes capable of imparting to the reader.\* One would therefore expect that his interest in King Arthur's Court and in Taliessin, the King's poet, to be largely confined to their potentialities as symbols, and this is in fact so. The framework of the poem is so complex that it defies adequate summary. Charles Williams himself makes an attempt at a summary in the Preface, but does not, I think, succeed any too well with his impossible task:

"But in general the argument of the series is the expectation of the return of Our Lord by means of the Grail and of the establishment of the Kingdom of Logres (or Britain) to this end by the Empire and Broceliande. Logres, however, was distracted by its own sins, and the wounding of King Pelles (the Keeper of the Hallows) by the Lord Balin the Savage was the Dolorous Blow which prevented the union of Carbonek and Logres and therefore the coming of the Grail. There followed, by a heavenly substitution, the begetting of Galahad by Lancelot on the Princess Helayne in an enchantment. Galahad is brought up in a convent of White

\* Williams' best known critical work, *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind* was published in 1933. An earlier book of poems, *Taliessin through Logres* was published in 1938, and the poem under review was first published in 1944. The latter is not really a sequel to *Taliessin through Logres*.

Nuns under the care of Dindrane, Percivale's sister. Afterwards he goes to the Court of Arthur and then departs, together with Percivale and Bors, for Carbonek and Sarra where he finally achieves the Grail.<sup>27</sup>

The Taliessin theme is an embroidery on this main argument, Taliessin being the symbol of the poet or seer. The high place Williams accords to the poet in society is a most interesting aspect of the poem for those who are not fundamentally moved by its true theme of the spread of Catholicism (as symbolized in the last section of the poem called "The Prayers of the Pope").

The quotation above gives, by the way, a good example of Williams' worst faults: this is a sort of turgid allusiveness, in which overfamiliarity with names as symbols in the writer leads to confusion in the reader, and evokes in the latter neither images nor emotions. One gets the impression that the colours in Williams' Byzantine painting have run together in places. Although short quotations are hardly fair, the few lines below giving Taliessin's own description of his high calling show the better possibilities of the verse-style, with its Miltonic and Wordsworthian overtones:

Scandal to the pious Jews, folly to the sly Greeks!  
But I was Druid-born and Byzantium-trained.  
Beyond Wye, by the cauldron of Ceridwen, I saw  
the golden sickle flash in the forest, and heard  
the pagans mutter a myth. . . .

To turn from *The Region of the Summer Stars* to *The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Graunia* is to turn from the complex to the simple. While Williams has stressed the "magic" aspects of his theme (he had before his death written a book on witchcraft and magic), Redwood Anderson has deliberately suppressed much of the "merely marvellous", as he himself points out in the Introductory Note. As in the case of most epics, what might be called the "love interest" is very slight in the original tale, and Diarmuid's relations with Graunia are, at the very least, rather noncommittal. But the whole significance of Anderson's poem lies in the growth of Diarmuid's love for Graunia (complicated by remorse and honour) as they flee from Graunia's aged betrothed, Finn mac Cúall, King of Ireland. Finally pardoned, the lovers live happily until Finn engineers Diarmuid's death by a wild boar in fulfilment of an old prophecy.

Seeing the black  
bulk of the boar and Diarmuid in his blood  
Finn knew that Hate's old debt was at last paid  
and that henceforth Diarmuid O Deenē stood  
no more between him and his love . . .

Redwood Anderson frequently employs that vague, atmospheric imagery which we have come to regard as typical of one variety of Irish poetry, and names are used for their musical value, rather than as intellectual symbols. The most disconcerting characteristic of the poem is, I think, a tendency towards softness (compare the early Yeats) and an irresistible attraction towards the consciously "poetic" passage. The lines below are a few among many:

The summer nights went by—the summer days  
followed each other, like calm gracious queens  
slow-stepping down a sunlit marble stair.

The summer nights followed each other,  
in sweet and fragrant knowledge, like those queens  
walking the roads of time  
Brigid and Níav of the Golden Hair. . . .

Fortunately, purple paragraphs do not occur in so frequent or extended a form as to spoil the narrative excellencies of the poem, excellencies which are undeniable, even allowing for the fact that many of them were already there in the original telling of the legend.†

Since, by now, an aspiring critic of modern poetry does not have to prove his *bona fides* by a staunch support of the crisp lyric against the long narrative or philosophical poem, I have no qualms in saying that I very much enjoy longer poems, and that both these poems have a great deal to enjoy provided that one criticizes them on a different basis from a book of more or less unconnected short poems. Probably the worst approach is to gouge out "lyric passages" from the whole. Read with an eye to the significance of their complete form, both *The Region of the Summer Stars* and *The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Graunia* succeed most creditably. Insofar as *The Region of the Summer Stars* succeeds with a rather more difficult task, I think it is the better poem.

LORRAINE LANCASTER

† For the legend translated, see Standish Hayes O'Grady, *Ossianic Society Transactions* III, 1857; and Mr Anderson's own references.

### SHAKESPEARE SURVEY

*Shakespeare Survey* 3. Edited by Allardyce Nicoll. (Cambridge University Press, 1950. 12s. 6d.)

Published annually since its inception in 1948, *Shakespeare Survey* has already established itself as a valuable guide for all who wish to keep abreast of Shakespearean scholarship and to hear news of Shakespearean productions in England and elsewhere. One of the most admirable features of the *Survey* is the practical recognition that Shakespeare belongs to the theatre as well as the study. A glance at the table of contents in each volume shows how carefully it has been planned to give fair representation to work in both spheres; and the handsome illustrations, also, are chosen to interest both the scholar and the theatre-lover.

The third volume of the *Survey* maintains the standard set by its predecessors. In accordance with the principle laid down in the first volume, the "core" consists of a series of articles devoted to one aspect of Shakespearean study: in this case, the study of the man and the writer. Professor Charles J. Sisson's article "Studies in the Life and Environment of Shakespeare since 1900" and James G. McManaway's "Recent Studies in Shakespeare's Chronology" are extremely useful summaries of work done in these fields. Professor F. P. Wilson writes learnedly and illuminatingly on Shakespeare's reading; and E. C. Pettet suggests a connexion between *Coriolanus* and a revolt of the peasants of Northamptonshire which took place in 1607.

Two articles are devoted to criticism of the plays: Professor Marco Mincoff's analysis of "The Structural Pattern of Shakespeare's Tragedies" and Clifford Leech's "The 'Meaning' of *Measure for Measure*." Mr Leech's study is valuable

not only in relation to *Measure for Measure*, but also as a protest against a trend in Shakespearian criticism exemplified by Elizabeth M. Pope's article on the same play in *Shakespeare Survey* 2: the tendency to seek underlying meanings in the plays by relating them to common beliefs of the period, and in so doing to over-simplify, ignoring inconsistencies of texture. An interpretation, however ingenious, however true *up to a point*, which does not fully explain the play's impact on audience or readers, is clearly inadequate. Such writers as Miss Pope, G. Wilson Knight, and Roy Battenhouse who emphasize the Christian meaning of *Measure for Measure* are speaking of something that is certainly present: but they overlook difficulties (due, I would suggest, to something wrong in the planning of the play, but in effect confusing to its ethics) which we are likely to feel if we examine honestly our reaction to some of its scenes. Mr Leech's analysis of these difficulties is persuasive because he recognizes that he is discussing situations in a drama, not themes in a symphony of a moral treatise. His exposure of the Duke's inconsistencies and inadequacies leaves little to be said along that line: but perhaps he does not put the emphasis in quite the right place. W. W. Lawrence was, I believe, right in calling Vincentio "a stage Duke", whose actions are mainly determined by theatrical exigencies; not, therefore, to be judged by ethical standards. The difficulty lies not so much in the Duke's behaviour as such (we could have accepted it without uneasiness in another kind of play) but in its occurring in a play which contains also Isabella, Angelo, and Claudio: in the fact that within the one plot we have to apply two totally different kinds of judgment. Mr Leech hints at this by referring to "an ambivalence in the character, a contradiction between its dramatic function and the human qualities implied by its words and actions"; but the point might have been pressed further.

An interesting theory that the structure of the Elizabethan stage was determined by the tradition of the old street theatre is put forward by C. Walter Hodges in "Unworthy Scaffolds". This leads on to a series of articles on Shakespearian production on the Continent, one of which gives a lively account of the history of *Othello* on the Parisian stage. Notes from correspondents abroad tell of current productions: for example, Mario Praz writes of a surrealist *Rosalinda*, with costumes by Dali, and the performance of *Troilus and Cressida* at the "Maggio musicale fiorentino" (an elaborate and bizarre production in the Boboli Gardens which I had the good fortune to see; as Professor Praz says, little of the spirit of the play was preserved, and it was a question whether, in the view of the audience, the chief honours went to Thersites or the magnificent horses ridden by the Greek and Trojan warriors!). Muriel St Clare Byrn contributes a detailed description of the Stratford production of *Henry VIII*, which vividly recreates the whole performance. While welcoming this successful innovation, however, one would like to see the articles in the first volume covering London and Stratford productions become a regular feature.

Summaries of the year's contributions to Shakespearian study, under three headings, complete a volume which all students of Shakespeare will be glad to add to their shelves.

T. G. HERRING

## FROM COAST TO COAST

*Coast to Coast, Australian Stories 1949-50.* Selected by Nettie Palmer. (Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1950. 10s. 6d.)

There are so few opportunities for the publishing of short-stories in Australia that one might well wonder how writers who are attracted by the possibilities of this literary form manage to keep alive their interest and enthusiasm. If you have had such doubts, the latest volume of *Coast to Coast*, under the experienced editorship of Nettie Palmer, will reassure you that worthwhile stories are being written, whatever the handicaps of publication. This, the ninth volume, is one of the best collections of the series. The standard of the seventeen stories that comprise the book is far more even than we have learnt to expect from the volumes of the past few years. It is a short-story collection which the Australian writer or reader will readily place on his shelves.

The general impression the collection makes is one of capable story-telling. Each story stands firmly enough on its own feet, from the "magazine" type (like Marjorie Barnard's "Say Good-Bye and Mean It" or R. S. Porteous's manly sea yarn, "Quite a Blow") to more serious and more penetrating studies like Vance Palmer's "Matheson's Wife" and John Morrison's "The Busting of Rory O'Mahony". Techniques, it seems in this collection, have become more comfortably the servants of writers and subjects. Most of the stories move well, assert themselves in a healthy fashion with little evidence of the conscious manipulation that has too frequently prevented satisfying statement.

The stories, well-rooted for the most part in the present-day "countryside", cover a wide range of life. They present an interesting series of contemporary close-ups, descriptive, interpretive, usually entertaining. A number of well-tried short-story writers is represented. Vance Palmer's "Matheson's Wife", a story *Meanjin* readers will immediately recall, deserves its pride of place. It is a well-fashioned and sensitively written story that one places immediately with Palmer's best work. Gavin Casey gives us a piece of rich entertainment in "The Bishop's Bookie", a story that shows him enjoying himself as humorist. John Morrison's "The Busting of Rory O'Mahony" is a strongly written yarn that presents a full-length picture of Rory, the man who for one day a year—St Patrick's Day—becomes Michael Eugene O'Mahony and who at last magnificently justifies himself. E. O. Schlunke is represented by another of his lively-written stories from life on the land. Art Hausler turns to the clash of the new and old in bee-farming. Judah L. Waten's story, "Mother", draws attention to him as one of the most capable of present-day Australian short-story writers. D'Arcy Niland contributes the story that won the *Sydney Morning Herald's* Literary Competition, "Without You In Heaven", re-reading of which makes more apparent the strain of sentimentality and, at times, tendency to over-writing which detract from a strongly-conceived character-study. These are the outstanding stories of the collection. Good work has been done, too, by the new-comers; Eric Lambert, poet Judith Wright and John Fountain. Lyndall Hadow's handling of her theme of female resiliency in "Full Cycle" is convincing though somewhat protracted.

The biennial instead of annual publication of the *Coast to Coast* volumes will be justified, perhaps, if the standard of the published stories is raised. One feels it a pity that the annual publication has not proved successful to the publishers. The quality of the present volume makes it more apparent than ever that disappointing sales are not the outcome of work of poor quality or of stories lacking lively entertainment. The fault lies rather with inadequate general knowledge. There are many readers in the community to enjoy this book if they are aware of its existence.

KEN LEVIS

### TAMING THE NORTH

*Taming the North.* By Hudson Fysh. Revised and enlarged edition. (Angus & Robertson, Sydney. 1950. 15s.)

*Australia's Frontier Province.* By C. L. A. Abbott (Angus & Robertson, Sydney. 1950. 16s.)

*I Saw a Strange Land.* By Arthur Groom (Angus & Robertson, Sydney. 1950. 15s.)

Alexander Kennedy, whose pioneer experience is the subject of *Taming the North*, was born in Scotland in 1837 and arrived at Rockhampton shortly before his twenty-fourth birthday. After working on nearer stations, he pushed out into wild north-westerly Queensland country, where, by his sturdy enterprise, he eventually became owner of extensive cattle-raising interests. When he was 87 years of age, as one of the original directors of the Qantas flying service, he flew over scenes of his early adventures. He was alive when this account of them was first published in 1933, but died in 1936 at the age of 98. A good deal of the narrative concerns the aborigines and clashes with them—an inevitable result of the coming of European settlers, who themselves were thereby endangered almost as much as the natives they dispossessed, so that it is scarcely possible to condemn the white man for defending himself against them without implying that he ought never to have colonized Australia at all. The book is a valuable pioneer record.

Prominent in *Taming the North* as a friend of Kennedy outback, F. C. Urquhart figures also in *Australia's Frontier Province*, the title of which denotes the Northern Territory, where, after retirement as Queensland Commissioner of Police, he was administrator for five years from 1921 (not 1922 as Mr Abbott states). Urquhart was appointed as especially fitted to deal with conditions which had led to the deportation in 1919 of highly placed officials by the organized workers of Darwin; but there is no truth in the story that he "carried a shotgun during his first year of office". Touches of that kind in the book are a result of some unavoidable reliance on the local folklore. To say that the Commonwealth Government "cast longing eyes" at the Northern Territory before acquiring it from South Australia is misleading, for the transfer was made under a provision of the federal constitution when the South Australian government, after a brave effort, gave it up as a bad job. It has been nothing but an embarrassment to the Commonwealth, which has lavished the taxpayers' money on it at a rate indicated by the fact that, as Mr Abbott states, it cost them in 1937 over £5000 for every adult European there. So, when Mr Abbott declares his "complete faith

in its future", anyone knowing the outcome of the many plans and prophecies of the past, may be pardoned for mentioning the schoolboy's misquotation of scripture to the effect that faith is the evidence of things not true; but the book is a useful account of the place both before and during the author's own term as Administrator from 1937 to 1946, which includes the period of the Japanese air raids.

*I Saw a Strange Land*, besides covering more freely the ground of H. H. Finlayson's estimable work, *The Red Centre*, gives an account of developments in more recent years, notably at Alice Springs as a result of the extension of mechanical transport accelerated by wartime conditions. The book graphically describes features of the land and some outlying pastoral holdings, and gives an account of the history and work of the Hermannsburg Aboriginal Mission. There is a good deal here, too, about the aborigines, though what is meant by the statement that they have "the minds of designing mathematicians" is not clear, since—as Dr Charles Chewings remarks in his sensible and vivid account of them in *Back in the Stone Age*—"on things abstruse, or existing in the mind only, they seem unable to concentrate"; and as for their "amazingly intricate and ceremonial network, which still baffles many of the world's foremost anthropologists", so far as that is so, it is because many of their beliefs and practices, as with primitive races generally, are mere custom having no other apparent explanation or purpose. This is illustrated in the wide variations in different tribes as regards their social organization by exogamic marriage devices.

Notwithstanding any complaints, these works are welcome for their lively facts free from the artificial coloring which adulterates most popular accounts from similar sources. All three provide photographic reproductions, especially good in *I Saw a Strange Land*, though a map, as in the other two, would have been an advantage.

FREDERICK T. MACARTNEY

## ENGLISH

*English: the Magazine of the English Association*, ed. Guy Boas. Vol. viii. Nos 43, 44, 45. (Cumberlege: Oxford Press, 1959. 3s; 6d.)

*English* is already familiar to most readers of *Southerly* as a reliable, if somewhat sedate, guide to English studies overseas. Although it appears in 1950 with a new editor, owing to the death of Mr George Cookson in 1949, the three issues for the year reveal no major change in the magazine's policy. Its province is still "English" in all its aspects—critical, scholarly, creative, educational, topical.

The risk in attempting to do a number of things at once is that none of them may be done well. This danger *English* at times avoids but narrowly. Thus few people, I imagine, must read the magazine for its verse. Fewer must read it for its "creative" prose, as exemplified in "Beams of Blood" and "A Bible Story". Possibly the space occupied by the editorial on the evils of television for the young, and by the article on "Public Taste in the Cinema", could have been saved for matters less ephemeral.

Though rarely stimulating, the literary articles in *English* are usually sound. The three numbers for 1950 contain a sober assessment of "The Contribution of Ezra Pound" by Robert Hume, a study of "The Imagery of *Romeo and Juliet*" by E. C. Pettet, and an appraisal by Guy Boas of "Lytton Strachey—Dramatic Critic". Cowper specialists will be interested in Bernard Martin's report of six letters to Cowper from John Newton, recently made accessible for the first time.

In the review section, the presence of such names as F. S. Boas and Vivian de Sola Pinto maintains the standard we have come to expect. For the Australian subscriber, it is probably in the review columns of *English* that its chief value lies. The more notable of current contributions to English studies—Nichol Smith's *Dryden*, Helen Gardner's *The Art of T. S. Eliot*, Hotson's *Shakespeare's Sonnets Dated*—are discussed at length, the less notable are glanced at in the admirable summaries, "Recent Reading", and there is a select bibliography of "New Books" to round the section off. *English* is for the oversea reader a useful means of keeping "in touch".

G. A. WILKES

#### THE HORRORS OF HANGOVER HALL

I was extremely interested and amused to read Mr Robert Crossland's explanation of the supposed haunting of my old studio in William Street, which he refers to as Lechery Lodge. In the days when I used the place for work and other purposes it did not bear such a glamorous title, although it had probably earned it, but I always think of it as Hangover Hall because of the climax to the strange visitations which were inflicted upon us.

The curious happenings in that studio have a very simple explanation for me. It differs from Mr Crossland's, as given in the Number Three, 1950, issue of *Southerly*, as much as it does from that of my brother Phil in *I'd Live the Same Life Over*.

My story is much more complicated, but it lacks the supernatural aura of Phil's and the sordidly romantic flavour of Mr Crossland's. However, I do not doubt the possible existence, in those gloomy upstairs attics, of a plink (sic)-ridden Quasimodo, such as Mr Crossland discovered. He might have existed in the building while we were there, but unless he had the contortionistic ability of an old-fashioned chimneysweep's boy, the agility of a kangaroo and the dexterity of Houdini, he was not the creature who was responsible for the supposed haunting.

Before I go any further I must apologize to Phil for presenting such a mundane explanation of the whole business. But, after all, he is an historical novelist and it is his job to evoke an atmosphere of mystery and drama from the simplest of happenings. However, simple as my explanation is, I must admit that, even after all these years, the episode has left some dramatic pictures in my mind, although they are tinged possibly more with the flavour of the Marx brothers than the Lindsay brothers.

To simplify the drama I will divide it into three acts; the first I will call

"The Dieting Artist", the second "The Frightened Journalist" and the third "The Terrified Singer".

The first act opened when Unk White, the black-and-white artist, developed a strange and inexplicable taste in food. At any time during the day he would rush into the studio, produce a pound of peas, shell them, boil them and, when they were cooked, he would pour out the peas and drink the water in which they had been boiled. This diet, according to him, did miracles to one's digestive organs, brain cells and other parts of one's anatomy.

After this had been going on for some time, the problem of the abandoned peas and their shells became quite worrying. They seemed to be everywhere. As Mr Crossland will probably remember, there was a large open fireplace in the centre of one of the walls of the studio and into this we used to fling all our rubbish and, when enough had accumulated, we would dispose of it by the simple expedient of applying a match to it. Despite this seemingly efficient method of getting rid of such unwanted trifles as old sketches and rejected manuscripts, Unk's pea shells dominated the garbage problem.

The second act opened when, one afternoon, a journalist friend arrived and asked if he could temporarily go into smoke in the studio and sleep there for a few nights. He was always having domestic trouble and he wanted to hide from his wife. I agreed, of course, and when I went home that night, I left him comfortably arranged on a large couch which was placed against the wall, opposite the fireplace.

When I arrived at the studio in the morning, I found my friend sitting hunched up most uncomfortably on the edge of the couch. His face was pale and he was in a very nervous condition. As soon as I had opened the door, he rushed at me, babbling that the place was haunted and that he would never sleep there again.

I was particularly surprised to see him in such a state of panic as he was a tough, young, belligerent Irishman, always full of fight. After he had calmed down, he told me his story. He said that, during the night, he had been awakened by some heavy object moving on the couch near him. He said that it was large and hairy and, as he touched it, it jumped from the couch. He made a guess at its size because, as it landed on the floor, the couch swayed and shook like a hammock in a gale. He heard it move along the floor; the doors rattled and then all was silence. He sat up for the rest of the night with the light on, too frightened to sleep.

It did not require any of Sherlock Holmes's powers of observation on my part to notice a trail of Unk's inevitable pea shells leading from the fireplace to the couch and so come to the obvious conclusion. However, my friend would not accept any such reasonable explanation for the presence of the hairy monster which had so frightened him. He hurriedly left the studio, preferring the known hazards of a ricocheting saucepan from the hands of a frenzied wife to the unknown perils of a possible poltergeist.

The third act opened at a party at the studio. One of the guests was Otho, a Danish singer and a most delightful companion. When he entered I noticed he was rather pale and shaken, and he told us that he had passed, in a corner of the stairs, a curious hairy shape. As there was no light on the stairs, he could

not distinguish it clearly, but enough light filtered in from a street lamp for him to see its blurred form before it scuttled away. However, as the party progressed he forgot his fears, as we also forgot his story of the strange encounter.

It was very late when the party finished, so Phil, Otho and myself decided to spend the night in the studio. Otho went to sleep on the couch while Phil and I made ourselves comfortable in a room, which (Mr Crossland will probably also remember) adjoined the studio.

I do not know how many hours had elapsed, but Phil and I were suddenly awakened by a rumpus in the studio, where the light flashed on. We jumped out of our beds and hurried out to see the huge and naked figure of Otho executing what appeared to be a war dance, with a large stick in his hand. When we had calmed him down, he told us that he had been awakened by strange noises in the fireplace and he got up to investigate. However, before he could reach the light switch in the far corner of that long room, he heard something bound past him, with floor-shaking thumps, down the studio; the doors rattled and then all was quiet as he switched on the light.

An examination of the fireplace disclosed more of Unk's confounded pea shells. I put forward the same theory that I had given my journalist friend about the hairy monster that Otho said he had encountered on the stairs, but he also would not consider such an explanation. He was emphatic that no rat could move in the way he had heard this thing move; there was no scampering of small feet but the sound of great leaps, possibly of some "gigantic hound"—or of a kangaroo, I sarcastically added. Even when I pointed out to him a small triangular hole cut in the bottom of the door, some previous tenant possibly having owned a cat, he refused to be convinced.

The remainder of the night was a very restless one. Phil and I went back to our beds while Otho sat, stark naked, with the stick clenched in his hands like the figure of some vengeful Norse god, in the doorway, all lights blazing, waiting for the hairy monster to return.

When the grim light of a hangover dawn started to dribble through the windows, Otho relaxed. He chatted brightly of the forthcoming day. He was leaving on a tour of New Zealand, while I felt inevitably that I would be starting on a different kind of tour—a tour in search of a new studio. It was the usual result of a really successful party.

Sure enough we had to seek new quarters and, with our exit from Hangover Hall (or Lechery Lodge), I gave up any thought of sending a report to either the Society for Psychical Research or the Rat Catchers' Department of the City Council.

As a footnote, I might add that we did once encounter, one frolicsome Sunday afternoon, a Quasimodo, similar to Mr Crossland's, skulking in the attics overhead. However, there were differences; he did not sink to the level of plink but went direct to the fountain-head of such nectar and drank methylated spirits. He was a journalist who lived near by and an accomplice of my Irish journalist friend's wife who had sent him down to snoop around the studio in the hope of discovering her husband in some abandoned posture.

However, I doubt if he could have been Mr Crossland's Quasimodo, for shortly afterwards he was taken to the Reception House and, as far as later inquiries proved, he was progressing satisfactorily at Callan Park.

RAYMOND LINDSAY

## TWO POETS, TWO POEMS

By HUGH ANDERSON

Soon after Chris Brennan's *A Chant of Doom* was published in 1916, the *Booklover* printed an indirect reply by the Victorian poet "Furnley Maurice" entitled *To God, From The Weary Nations*. The following year this was published in book form, a little later a copy was requested for the library of the National War Museum of France. From its first appearance it was hailed as an outstanding achievement. But H. H. Champion, the editor of the *Booklover*, was not so certain and Brennan positively rejected any claims on its behalf.

When the book arrived at his office, Champion decided to seek other opinions as to the poem's value and sent copies to Brennan at Sydney University and Professor Walter Murdoch at its Western Australian counterpart. Their replies read as follows:

The University of Sydney.

Dear Sir,

It was perhaps appropriate that the author of *A Chant of Doom* should be asked to give his opinion on an invitation to

"Forget the doom and shrieking curses hurled  
On foes that lie in death magnificent",

though I must begin by protesting that never, within my own knowledge, have I so maltreated curses as to force a shriek from them.

Your author invites the major part of humanity to abase itself before God in a grovelling ecstasy of self reproach, as being all sinners together. It is the sophistry of G. B. Shaw in a new garb. Certainly we are all sinners but not together, not so as to form a "sinner's brotherhood". For Germany insisted on sinning apart. There can be no question of "share and share": we had no share in that. Our sins were human, not extra-human. Even if every individual German were as superior to all the rest of us as he thinks himself to be—an inconceivable case, for it is not as individual but as German that he believes himself superior—that consciousness of his superiority, carried to an ecstatic belief in his absolute otherness, and the intention\* into which he transforms that belief, would still make him transcendently evil. The whole business has been told in pattern, it is the legend of Lucifer.

It is useless then to try and muddle the truth by playing at one moment on the peerless qualities of the individual, at another on our poor humanity. Our poor humanity is there to work out a task and our very life-breath, as Euripides puts it, is the distinction between justice and injustice. Those peerless valiant foes, now so magnificent, gave themselves to the embodiment of a lie and sin of the soul. They insisted on our regarding them collectively—it is no use to tell me that they were misled: each man lives on his own responsibility—

\* I, at least, do not accuse him of merely "barbarous intent".

and we looked into that face which they bade us worship and it was the Face of Evil. To slay the evil, the will behind that evil, they, who have given themselves to be its flesh and bone, must be slain, their wives and children starved. And these things are hard; and justice is cruel, as your author rightly remarks. And so, to escape justice, you must begin by burking the truth: his instinct leads him aright.

Now if all this summons to a universal day of penance were sincere, it would possess its own possible value as poetry: but it is not sincere. Our crime is not against God, not against "humanity": it is against the pacifists.

"We have slain the visions of goodmen". There they tower, calm and unstained, "above the tempest"—though curiously enough the battle (i.e., presumably, the tempest) blows their protest back into their faces . . . there they await our grovelling and whimpering amends: for as soon as they shine out we become, all the rest of us, a lot of nasty little "children". They are saints of dedication, "the martyred minority", quotha! . . . Interpreting generously, I took their martyrdom to be just this murder of their "dreams"; but the author actually dangles the "hangman's rope" in dreadful perspective.

A sublime and complacent self righteousness, well-matching that of our magnificent foes! And these men are "dreamers", as we are told of the Sinn Féin leaders. Dreaming is easy, thinking is hard: justice is cruel and your sensitive heart is more easily satisfied and flattered with its own acquiescence in evil (and yet when Christ told us to turn the other cheek I don't remember that he told us "to share and share" the sin, no matter how much we may have wantonly tempted the sinner by that smooth and shining expanse of smugly inoffensive cheek—an argument actually used in America towards surrendering to German U-boats that freedom of the seas they demand): in short I know of nothing that is easy, anywhere, and at the same time worth having. I cleave to that distinction which is to me, as to Euripides, the very life-breath of our being in this world: and my hate of evil shall last, even at the risk of becoming hate of the evil one. But it needs no Mr Maurice to teach me to distinguish there: long before I even knew of his existence I had learned from William Blake.

Good writing and good verse are also hard: and a writer who is so free and easy with his ideal ultimates is not likely to succeed better with his form. As a whole the thing is not poetry and the special effect at which the writer aims, a kind of psalmodic chant, is spoiled by the lack of massiveness, either of sense or sound, in such a termination as "our poor humanity". From a metrical point of view quite bad lines are not wanting e.g. "murky, mediaeval paths of murder and gloom": the rhymes are generally weak and indistinguished. The style is mostly harsh, flat and prosaic e.g. no. vi, lines 16-20 (several monsters there: "terrific" and "imbecilic" ! ! ! ) and not merely ridiculous through mixture of images felt and employed merely as rhetorical figures (I have already, above, given two instances) but sometimes obscure to the point of being, for me at least, unintelligible. I desiderate in no. i an explanation of the very first line, in line 6 of the words "no more clay than we" and of the logical connections of "For" in the next line. . . . Enough of this: I will quote one good line, not of poetry but of epigrammatic prose: "Knowing that life is carrion, and a soul . . ." I wish the author had applied it better to that life which is the war against evil.

You have here my opinion, I will not say unprejudiced, but matured, formed on no hasty reading of the book, and at least endeavouring after honesty. I imagine that you will receive many other opinions that will seem to you more in harmony with the merits of the book as hidden from me, but I wish to acknowledge your courtesy by sending you, even in the press of much care and business, this, for all its length, imperfect statement.†

Yours very faithfully

H. H. Champion, Esq.

Chris. Brennan.

Walter Murdoch took exactly the opposite view, praising the poem highly.

University of Western Australia,

Perth, May 22nd, 1917.

My Dear Champion,

Why all this motk humility? Why pretend that you do not know true poetry when you see it, that you must have someone else's opinion, etc.? You know as well as I do that Wilmot's poem is a poem in the best sense. It will be read long after the war is over and its author will be gratefully remembered as one of the small and gallant band that dared to bear witness to the truth that was in them in a world where, for certain black years, the lie was visibly enthroned among the nations, and the truth-teller was regarded as a criminal. Wilmot is to be congratulated—if congratulation were not in such matters a horrible impertinence—on the courage he has displayed in this invocation to the God who gave him a soul to be set on fire and a brain to find expression in noble and burning words his vision of the Truth. I have not been so moved by anything that has been written since the war came, and I am very much your debtor for sending it to me. If you are sending copies to the booksellers here I shall try to make people buy

With kindest regards, believe me, my dear Champion,

Yours

WALTER MURDOCH

† The poem has since been revised (see *Poems* by Furnley Maurice, selected by Percival Serle, 1944)—EDITOR.

## CORRESPONDENCE

59 Napier Street,  
Claremont,  
Western Australia.

Dear Sir,

I am making a study of the life and writing of D. H. Lawrence with special reference to the period he spent in Western Australia and New South Wales during 1922.

I am anxious to trace letters and documents and to get in touch with anyone who might have had personal contact with Lawrence at that time.

## SOUTHERLY

If any of your readers have such letters or documents in their possession, or can suggest any source which I might investigate, I should be most grateful if they would communicate with me.

Yours sincerely,  
WILLIAM McLEAN

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### THE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION:

#### SYLLABUS FOR 1951

March 7.—Annual General Meeting. Followed by readings from their own poems by June Hartnett, Nancy Keesing, and Roland Robinson.

April 4.—Colin Roderick, M.A., M.Ed.: "Roderic Quinn."

May 2.—G. A. Wilkes, B.A.: "Francis Thompson."

June 6.—K. J. Lancaster, B.A.: "Cross-Currents in Modern Australian Poetry."

July 4.—Donovan Clarke, B.A.: "Henry Kendall."

August 1.—H. L. McLoskey, M.A., LL.B.: "New or Nowhere?"

September 5.—Papers by students.

Patricia Davies: "Maxwell Anderson."

D. J. Drinkwater: "Christopher Fry as Poet."

October 3.—R. B. Wilson, B.A.: "John Steinbeck."

November 22.—Annual Dinner.

H. M. BUTTERLEY,  
Hon. Secretary.

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### NOTES AND COMMENTS

*Honour for Literature*—At the New Year the O.B.E. was awarded to Robert D. FitzGerald, the poet, author of *Seven Metaphysical Songs*, *To Meet the Sun*, *Moonlight Acre*, and *Heemskerck Shoals*, and winner of the Australian Sesqui-Centenary Prize for Poetry (1938). As a reader of manuscripts he has greatly assisted the Commonwealth Literary Fund Board. Congratulations are offered to Mr FitzGerald.

*The Lure of Crime*—With *The Sleeping House Party*, published by Michael Joseph, Miss Elizabeth Lambert, the Australian poet, who is now in London, joins the writers of popular "thrillers". Her chosen group is ingeniously secluded in a coastal resort fifty miles north of Sydney, and the first corpse is served with enough novelty to activate even the most jaded ghoul. Miss Lambert's airy English perhaps achieves its best effects in the portrayal of certain city types, with their peculiar idiom, whom she has observed. Less successful is her heroine-narrator with the fluttering heart in the big body, who rather tends to get between the reader and the story.

*Waldock's "Hamlet"*—Extracts from A. J. A. Waldock's book on *Hamlet* are given in Claude N. Williamson's recently published compilation, *Readings on the Character of Hamlet*, 1661-1947.

*Appointment*—Dr A. N. Jeffares, a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, and Oxford, Lecturer in English at Edinburgh University, and author of *W. B. Yeats: Man and Poet*, has been appointed to the Chair of English Literature in Adelaide University.

*Corrections, Southerly No. 1*—Page 2, for *quelmque* read *quemque*; page 30, line 20, for "less of repose" read "loss of repose"; page 44, line 7, for "Hope" read "Hope's"; line 2, for "been loved" read "been beloved"; page 45, line 2, for "meeting-rod" read "meting-rod"; page 46, line 18, for "quiet" read "quite"; line 35, for "not any" read "not in any"; page 57, for "J. W. Rawling" read "J. N. Rawling".

*Coast to Coast, 1951-2*—Contributions are invited for the tenth (1951-2) issue of the anthology of Australian short stories, *Coast to Coast*, now to be published every second year. Writers should submit no more than two or three recently written stories; works already published may be submitted, and stories not used will be returned. This year's editor is Mr Ken Levis.

Contributions should be addressed to the Editor, *Coast to Coast*, care of Angus & Robertson Ltd, 89 Castlereagh St, Sydney. The closing date is August 31.

*Essays by Divers Hands*.—Volume XXV of the Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature (1950) assembles nine essays by "divers hands". Worthy of note, as specifically concerned with literary criticism, are C. M. Bowra's revaluation of *Atlanta in Calydon*, Professor Gordon Ray's examination of the social purpose in *Vanity Fair*, and Somerset Maugham's lecture on "The Short Story". E. H. W. Meyerstein makes a further contribution to Chatterton biography in "A Bristol Friendship: Thomas Chatterton and John Baker", and G. M. Young takes up once more the problem of "Scott and History".—G. W.

*Australian Literature*—The Commonwealth Literary Fund lectures on Australian literature, at the University of Sydney, were delivered this year by T. Inglis Moore, B.A. (Syd.), M.A. (Oxon.), Senior Lecturer in Pacific Studies at the Canberra University College. The course consisted of five seminars under the title "The Social Mirror", and five lectures on individual writers. The topics of the seminar course were: 1. The Clash of Cultures 2. Radicalism 3. Mateship 4. Realism 5. Austral Pan. The writers discussed in the corresponding lecture course were Henry Handel Richardson, A. G. Stephens, Henry Lawson, Louis Esson, and Judith Wright.

*British Council Series*—On behalf of the British Council, Longmans, Green & Co. are issuing a series of supplements to *British Book News*, in the form of monographs on notable writers. Each pamphlet has a frontispiece, an essay of the "introductory" kind suited to the student and the general reader, and a select bibliography. The general editor is T. O. Beachcroft. Titles already published include *T. S. Eliot*, by M. C. Bradbrook; *Byron*, by Herbert Read; *Henry James*, by Michael Swan; *William Blake*, by Kathleen Raine; *Tobias Smollett*, by Laurence Brander, and *Arnold Bennett*, by Frank Swinnerton.—G.W.

*Landfall*—The issue of this New Zealand quarterly for December, 1950 contains an article by S. Musgrove on "The Flowering of New Holland". Beginning with the assertion that "Australian literature even now is not more than 'adolescent'", Professor Musgrove finds the cause in Australia's lack of "that body of native thought, that universal statement of a national philosophy" which lies behind (say) the literature of nineteenth-century America. The thesis becomes doubtful as it is applied to specific writers. Brennan's achievement is somehow reduced by his "sense of hostility" to the world he lived in, Hugh McCrae solved the problem by a "constant evasion of reality" which has made him a lesser poet than he might have been, Henry Handel Richardson preserved herself by leaving Australia before it was too late . . . .

With No. 1 of 1951, *Landfall* enters its fifth year.—G.W.

"*The Judas-coloured sun*"—This phrase, used by Edith Sitwell in her poem "Lullaby", is based on Dryden's description of the publisher Jacob Tonson in the epigram he began and threatened to circulate: "With two left legs, and Judas-coloured hair". Judas was traditionally represented with red hair, red being the colour of treachery.

*Furphy*—A comprehensive article on Furphy by Bruce Sutherland appears in the *University of Toronto Quarterly* for January.

"*Essays in Criticism*"—An Oxford quarterly with this title (suggested by Matthew Arnold's famous collection) began to appear last January. An editorial note states: "*Essays in Criticism* is not in any sense an official publication. Nor is it intended to be the organ of a new 'Oxford' school of criticism, which might challenge the so-called 'Cambridge' school of Dr F. R. Leavis, Professor L. C. Knights and their associates. On the contrary, we shall do our best to print every kind of literary criticism—academic, Empsonian, Anglo-Catholic or Marxist—provided it is good of its kind. We have, it is true, certain general predilections. The criteria we propose are: (i) *constructiveness* (the pre-existing problem must be taken one stage further); (ii) *social relevance* (as far as possible the literary problem must not be divorced from the problems of group-living, in the widest sense, that lie behind it); (iii) *scholarly standards* (there must not be the 'howlers' and the unawareness of what is already in print displayed by too many critics and reviewers today). An ultimate objective is to help to build a bridge between literary history and literary criticism." It may seem a pity to open the pages of a new review to any kind of *a priori* or tendentious writing: the object, surely, ought to be to seek the truth with impartiality. The first essay in this number is appropriately on "Matthew Arnold and the Modern Dilemma". The Editor, F. W. Bateson, contributes both a refutation of the recent *Shakespeare's Sonnets Dated* ("Elementary, my dear Hotson! A Caveat for Literary Detectives") and a note on the origin and use of the term "Comedy of Manners" (in which he was anticipated by some 16 years in lectures on Restoration Comedy at the University of Sydney). An article of T. S. Eliot's entitled "The Three Provincialities" is reprinted from *The Tyro*, a review of 1922, and because of the ineptness of the literary prophecy it contains was hardly worth reviving. Mr Eliot, however, adds a 1950 postscript in which he owns that he "cannot regard the article as a whole as anything but a very small literary curio". Professor Geoffrey Tillotson makes some practical suggestions on "Teaching English in the Universities" (this was

evidently a talk given somewhere, perhaps in the U.S.A.). Kenneth Muir (since appointed to the King Alfred Chair of English Literature in the University of Liverpool) has a "Centenary Eclogue: A Conversation about Wordsworth", re-discussing the problem, "Did his body outlive his mind?" and incidentally turning into sections of blank verse lines offers and acceptances of drinks. The other items are: "Dorset Hardy", by L. A. G. Strong; "The Mystery of Poe's Poetry", by Montgomery Belgion; and "A Note on 'The Family Reunion'", by J. Middleton Murry. Contributions to future numbers should be sent to the Editor at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. The magazine is published at 4s. a number, or 15s. a year, by Basil Blackwell, 49 Broad Street, Oxford.

*Hotson Refuted*—In the article mentioned above Mr Bateson argues against Dr Hotson's interpretation of sonnet 107 and dating in 1589, on the ground that the interpretation conflicts with "the poetic argument of the work as a whole". The crucial passage runs:

The mortall Moone hath her eclipse indur'de,  
And the sad Augurs mock their own presage.

Hotson takes the reference to be to the defeat of the Armada (drawn up in crescent battle formation), whereas it has been traditionally applied to Queen Elizabeth (often complimented as Diana, the virgin goddess of the moon), celebrating her recovery from serious illness, probably in 1596. Bateson rightly queries Hotson's assumption that the moon was crescent. (An astronomer would perhaps settle the question by pointing out that a crescent moon does not suffer eclipse; in any case the natural implication seems to be that the moon was full.) Bateson accordingly disagrees with Hotson's dating of the first series of sonnets, 1-126, before and in 1589 and adheres to 1596 or 1599, because of stylistic resemblances to other works of those years. Here perhaps he overlooks the possibility of revision. Hotson is probably right in his dating of the series by other topical allusions they contain—the re-erection of ancient obelisks in Rome and the assassination of Henri III of France—and therefore in his general argument. But there is no need for precise allusion: on general grounds the sonnets are likely to have been early (see, for example, the reference by Shakespeare to his own poetic strivings and envy of others' success, which would ring oddly between 1596 and 1603, when he was a thriving poet and playwright). "Shakespeare's power," says Hotson sensibly, "had reached maturity by the time he was no more than twenty-five years old." *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* were written especially to please the taste of the Earl of Southampton. "Mr W.H." of the sonnets cannot be identified with Southampton who was too young at the new date of the sonnets, and indeed, since "Master" could never have been used in address to a nobleman, must be a gentleman or squire—still to be identified. It remains only to assume that Shakespeare in sonnet 107 congratulates Elizabeth on the fortunate escape of the realm (personified in her) from the Spanish threat.

*The Teaching of English*—In his address on "English and its Contributors", printed in the Spring Number of the magazine, the editor, Guy Boas, remarks on the difficulty of securing the active co-operation of teachers. "Fewer articles on English teaching than might be expected" are received or supplied on request, and little discussion of teaching problems takes place in the correspondence sec-

tion. Whilst making due allowance for the exactions of the profession Mr Boas seems to hope that to a greater extent in the future *English* will be able to fulfil one of the functions for which it was designed. The experience of the Sydney Branch of the Association has been that teachers as such do not show so much interest in its work as they might, and fail to take advantage of the opportunity *Southerly* offers for the publication of articles and letters on educational matters of general concern, particularly the teaching of English. *Southerly*, however, lays less stress on this function than does *English*, especially since there exist, as in England, a number of scholastic periodicals.

#### PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

*English Poetry: A Critical Introduction*, by F. W. Bateson. (Longmans, Green and Co., London and Melbourne, 1950. 10s. 6d.)

*Galley: The International Medium of Exchange of Ideas and Information on Experimental Avant-Garde and Little Magazine*, edited by Whipple McClay, Vol. II, No. 1, Spring 1950. (Box 190, North Hollywood, California, U.S.A. 50 cents.)

*Three Australian Three-Act Plays*, by Dymphna Cusack. (Australasian Publishing Co., Sydney, 1950. 8s. 6d.)

*A Dog for Robin*, by Nancy Stuart Gurr, with Line Illustrations by John Auld. (Australasian Publishing Co., 1950. 4s. 6d.)

*These Years: An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry*, edited by Howard Sergeant. (E. C. Arnold & Son Ltd, Leeds, England, n.d. 4s. 6d.)

*Sir John Franklin in Tasmania, 1837-1843*, by Kathleen Fitzpatrick. (Melbourne University Press, 1949. 25s.)

*Caroline Chisholm*, by Margaret Kiddle. (Melbourne University Press, 1950. 21s.)

*Select Documents in Australian History, 1788-1850*, selected and edited by C. M. H. Clark with the assistance of L. J. Pryor. (Angus and Robertson, 1950. 30s.)

*Poems of Rossetti*, chosen by Lilian Howarth. (Angus and Robertson, 1950. 16s.)

*British Services Education*, by Major General C. Lloyd. (Published for the British Council by Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1950.)

*Poems*, by James Devaney. (Angus and Robertson, 1950. 10s. 6d.)

*English: The Magazine of the English Association*, edited by Guy Boas, Summer 1950. (London, 3s. 6d.)

*Visual Aids Review*, issued by the Department of Visual Aids, University of Melbourne, Vol. I, No. 1, August 1950. (Melbourne University Press. 3s. 6d.)

*The Foundation of Australia (1785-1800): A Study of English Criminal Practice and Penal Colonization in the Eighteenth Century*, by Eris O'Brien, M.A., Ph.D. (Angus and Robertson, second edition, 1950. 25s.)

*Australian Poetry, 1949-50*, selected by Rosemary Dobson. (Angus and Robertson, 1950. 17s. 6d.)

## THE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION (SYDNEY BRANCH) Office Bearers, 1951

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\* Chairman of Committee.

### Objects of the Association

- (a) To promote the due recognition of English as an essential element in the national education and to help in maintaining the purity of the language through correctness in both its spoken and its written use.
- (b) To discuss methods of teaching English, and the correlation of school and university work.
- (c) To encourage and facilitate advanced study in English literature and language.
- (d) To unite all those occupied with English studies or interested in the Arts; to bring teachers into contact with one another and with writers and readers who do not teach; to induce those who are not themselves engaged in teaching to use their influence in the promotion of knowledge of English and of its literature as a means of intellectual progress.
- (e) To encourage and facilitate the study of Australian literature.

### Advantages of Membership

1. Every member of the Association is a member of the English Association, London, and receives direct from England the Annual Report. Members may also obtain through the Secretary, by payment of 6s., the three numbers of the magazine *English* for any year, and the Annual Presidential Address. Copies of *Essays and Studies* and *The Year's Work in English Studies* are available at largely reduced prices.
2. Members may attend the meetings held in Sydney each month. At these meetings addresses are given; poems, dramas and other literary works are read, and opportunities are given for discussion and social intercourse.
3. Selected papers are printed and distributed to members in booklet form. *Southerly* is issued four times a year.
4. An Annual Dinner is held, usually in the University Union Refectory.
5. The Executive Committee is prepared to help in the formation and maintenance of branch associations in suburbs and country districts.
6. Advice and help will be given as far as possible in reading and teaching English literature, and in literary work generally.

**Subscription:** The annual subscription, at the following rates, is payable to the Hon. Secretary, 25 Hanna Street, Beecroft:

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